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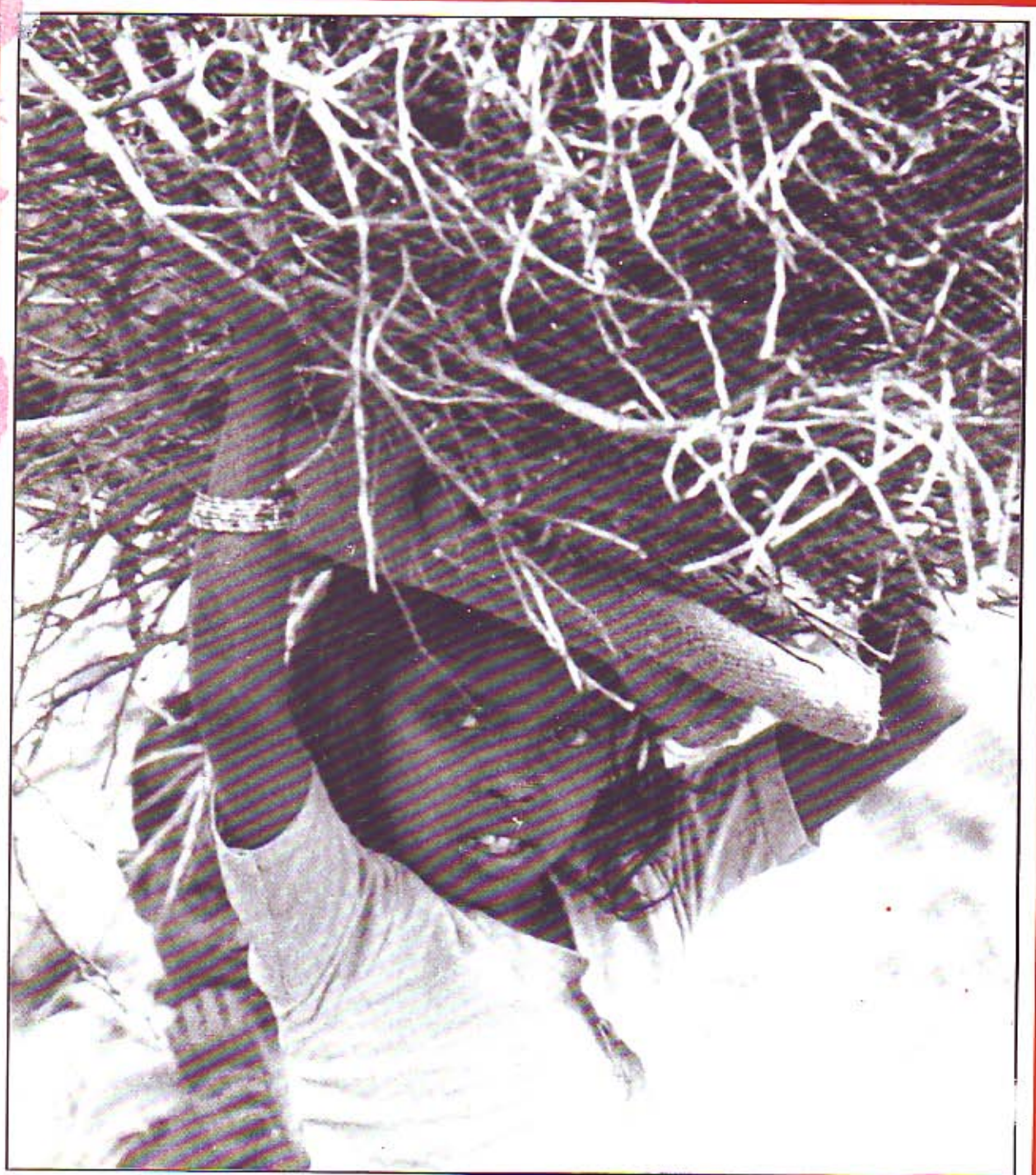

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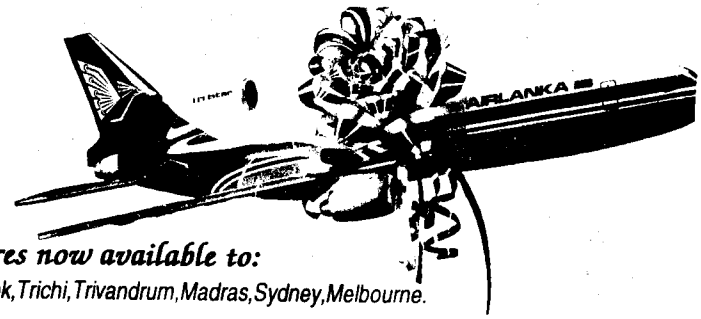

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'I do not agree with a word of what you say, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it.'
– Voltaire.

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WAR AND PEACE

The summary rejection by the Sri Lankan government and the vitriolic denunciations in the Colombo-based national news media of the 'Peace Plan' put forward by four Nobel prize winners belonging to the Canada-based World Council for Global Co-operation are characteristic of the patently negative response over the years of those in authority and influence to the continuing ethnic conflict and the war. The angry reaction with claims of 'foreign interference in the internal affairs of the country' and 'infringement of national sovereignty', particularly in the editorial columns of the so-called national newspapers, whether state-controlled or otherwise, to the suggestion of mediation to the conflict by the Secretary General of the United Nations is nothing but jingoistic nonsense and sanctimonious humbug.

Every year the island's Finance Minister and his officials make their annual pilgrimage, with cap in hand, to Paris to beg for aid and grants from donor countries who have, on an average forked out 900 million US dollars annually in recent years. They subject Sri Lanka and its people to draconian pre-conditions imposed by donor countries, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other international agencies in the process of seeking aid and grants.

Already, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross are heavily involved in dealing with the problems of internally and externally displaced people and undertaking humanitarian tasks within their mandates. In recent years, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and its subsidiary bodies have concerned themselves and adopted resolutions in regard to the human rights situation in the country. Fact-finding missions by UN human rights agencies and other international human rights organisations have visited the island and issued reports critical of the abuse of human rights in the country.

However, when it comes to the ethnic question, there are those in the country who raise their hands in horror at the prospect of foreign or international mediation. The fact is that Sri Lanka has over the years neglected, failed and has been unable to resolve the conflict which has resulted in the death of tens of thousands and displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. People have fled the country and sought refuge in various parts of the world literally in their thousands. The spill-over effects of the conflict in the island have had their impact on not only neighbouring India, but also other countries which have given asylum to people terrorised and displaced by the ongoing war. The flow of refugees into other countries from Sri Lanka continues unabated as the fighting intensifies. Sri Lankan authorities and the editorial commentators must realise that the conflict in the island is already internationalised.

A realistic assessment of the progress of the war during the last three years must convince even the congenital optimist that the government and its forces cannot impose a military solution to the conflict. The only course open is negotiations between the parties in direct conflict and other concerned parties. If the parties to the conflict cannot get together to talk for any reason, then there is nothing wrrong, and in fact there is great merit in obtaining the services of outside mediators or the Secretary General of the United Nations to help in the negotiating process.

Recently the Secretary General of International Alert, Dr. Kumar Rupasinghe, referred to the growth of vested interests in the course of protracted internal armed conflicts. He said that there international forces which promoted war-making efforts in various countries; these forces thrived on the enormous profits they derived from the sale of arms to both sides; there was a strong link between the parties to a conflict and the illicit drugs and arms network; there were various parties inside the country who were making vast profits through the prolongation of the war; and there was a strong lobby working overtime for the continuation of the war. The views of the editorial commentators seem to reflect the aspirations of this war-making lobby rather than those of the vast mass of the people who are yearning for peace and restoration of normalcy.

President Wijetunga recently lamented while speaking at a public function that the government had been spending a staggering Rs. 25,000 million (Rs.25 billion) annually during the last few years and had to allocate a similar amount for the forthcoming year for the purpose of prosecuting what he described as the 'senseless war' in the Northeast of the island. If he wants to bring an end to this colossal wasteful expenditure, he ought to concentrate his efforts to bring about a negotiated resolution of the conflict, and not hesitate to seek the assistance of men and women of goodwill and peace whether they be in Sri Lanka or outside. The war-mongers will soon lose their ill-gotten profits and the people will benefit from the peace dividend.

Thondaman Resumes Peace Moves Amidst Govt. Reluctance

from Rita Sebastian, Colombo

Minister Thondaman has swung back into the role of mediator between the government and the Tigers by announcing that he is ready to go to Jaffna to meet with the Tiger leadership, to negotiate a peace settlement.

It seems most unlikely that the government will avail itself of his services in view of the howl of protests from hardline Sinhala chauvinists, when he did offer his services on an earlier occasion.

Moreover, the government has, on more than one occasion made it quite clear that there has to be a consensus solution to the northeast issue if it is to endure.

No government will be able to ram down a settlement on the country to which the majority community has not been a willing partner. And it is for this reason that both the government and the main opposition Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) have to agree on a devolution package to the northeast of the country that will also meet Tamil demands.

Thondaman, once a critic of federalism as a solution to the northeast conflict seems to have changed his mind. The main proposal that has been discussed, in the now much publicised discussions between Minister Thondaman and Tiger spokesman in Paris, Lawrence Thilagar is a federal arrangement for the northeast.

Thondaman who opted out of the Parliamentary Select Committee because he did not subscribe to the de-merger of the northeast provinces, or for that matter was strongly against federalism as a solution, seems to have been won over to the idea by the Tigers.

'The picture looks bright. But everything depends on whether the government is ready to snatch the opportunity to meet the Tigers at the negotiating table,' says Ceylon Workers Congress President and Government Minister, S. Thondaman.

'The ruling United National Party (UNP) and the main opposition Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) accepted Jaffna MP Srinivasan's proposal to the Parliamentary Select Committee for a federal arrangement for the northeast. So what is needed now is somehow to co-ordinate and bring about a solution', says Thondaman.

Thondaman is yet to present his 'peace package' to President Dingiri Banda Wijetunge and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe.

The Tigers, according to Minister Thondaman, had indicated to him that they were turning to him not as a member of the government but as a Tamil leader.

'They were disappointed I didn't go to Jaffna the last time' he says of his earlier offer to mediate in the conflict.

Thondaman talks of an interim arrangement in the northeast where the Tigers will play the lead role. 'Anyone else who has a role to play will be included' he says.

The only two people who can bring peace to this troubled land, according to Thondaman, is the government and the Tigers.

Thondaman dismisses the allegation that the Tigers are trying to buy time, and this another well orchestrated ploy.

'They have enough time on their hands. They fought the Indian army and continue to fight the Sri Lankan army. They don't require any time', he says.

Rival Tamil groups in Colombo however are angry at the stand taken by Minister Thondaman that they are 'irrelevant' and count for nought in any negotiated settlement for the northeast.

However irrelevant they are in the thinking of Thondaman, Tamil groups who opted to enter the democratic process cannot be swept under the carpet. For all intents and purposes they are the elected representatives of the Tamil people in the absence of the Tigers who boycotted elections. So until another election is held, and representatives fairly and legitimately chosen, the people will have to accept the Tamil representatives who now sit in parliament.

As the war gets bloodier and the casualties mount, the fact is being brought home that this is an unwinnable war. Yet both sides stubbornly refuse to make the first move. There have been pious mouthings by both sides that they are ready to return to the negotiating table, but neither side has translated that into any positive action.

Meanwhile there have been significant developments on the war front. Following the devastating attacks by sea Tigers on Sri Lankan naval craft in the northern seas, the government has taken, what defence analysts describe as some very positive steps.

President Dingiri Banda Wijetunge promulgated emergency regulations to declare the territorial waters extending from northwest Mannar to eastern Trincomalee as a prohibited zone, disbanded the Joint Operations Command (JOC) and in its place set up a small security coordinating committee.

This in effect means that the JOC, considered a millstone around the necks of the three service commanders, preventing them mapping out strategy at ground level has been removed.

A government at the receiving end of bitter opposition criticism of having not taking any effective steps, either politically or militarily, to resolve the on-going conflict seems to be gearing itself for some positive action. But what form that action will take is still unclear.

★ In London & Paris

Sri Lanka's Tourism and Rural Industrial Development Minister and the President of the Ceylon Workers Congress, Mr. S. Thondaman visited London during late August as the Chief Guest of the 'Festival of India' organised by the Mayor of the London Borough of Lewisham, Mr. Sinna Mani.

Mr. Sinna Mani, the first Sri Lankan Tamil to become a Mayor of a London Borough, gave a reception in honour of Mr. Thondaman which was attended by many Sri Lankans. During his visit, Mr. Thondaman addressed a meeting held at Conway Hall attended by a cross-section of expatriate Tamils living in London which was organised by the Tamil Information Centre and was presided over by Dr. Pasupathirajah.

During his speeches and in answers to questions, Mr. Thondaman's main message was that his main responsibility in politics had been to serve the plantations Tamil to win back their lost rights. He was able to remove the status of 'statelessness' of his people and regain their voting rights by a combination of struggle and cooperating with the government as a Minister.

Mr. Thondaman declined the invitation by some in the audience for him to assume the leadership of Sri Lankan Tamils living in the Northeast of the island also in the context of the continuing war and the plight in which

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Govt. Makes a Hasty Retreat on Local Elections in the East

(by our Special Correspondent in Colombo)

The sudden decision of the D.B. Wijetunge administration to call for local government elections in eastern Sri Lanka and in northern Vavunia and its equally hasty decision to cancel them within the course of a week, demonstrated beyond all doubt that Premadasa's successors were also set to cluelessly bungle in the ethnic morass. The decision to hold the polls caught every one by surprise – including the pro-government Douglas Devananda's E.P.D.P., which had been supremely confident only the day before that the government would soon implement its proposal to set up an interim council for the northeast.

Government sources remained tight-lipped about the exact reason which had prompted the decision. Many senior politicians of the U.N.P. were apparently not privy to it. Two reasons were attributed to the government's unusually hasty announcement to hold elections. One was that the army which had been strongly suggesting to the government from last year to hold elections in the east in order to facilitate the political agenda of their counter-insurgency program in that province, had ultimately prevailed upon the President and the Prime Minister. Apart from being a necessary adjunct to the multi-faceted task of counter-insurgency, the elections, it had been argued, would help boost the sagging morale of the army. It could be upheld as a positive achievement in order to re-inject the much needed sense of purpose and enthusiasm into the ranks of the troops at the war front whose morale could not for long withstand the military stalemate. And in addition to this professional concern in the army, it is also well known in military circles that such an election, if successfully conducted, could boost the image and standing of Maj. Gen. Luxman Algama, head of the Sri Lankan Army's eastern command, who many military analysts believe would become the next army commander.

The other reason that is attributed to the move is that the government was anxious to show the world that it could apply the electoral process to the north-east – at least by stages – to avert unfavourable developments in Geneva where the UN Sub-Committee on Human Rights was meeting, which it was feared, could eventually lead to U.N. intervention in the country's ethnic conflict. One report said that Sri Lanka's diplomatic service was put on top alert on August 19 to counter a draft resolution on Sri Lanka which was to be taken up the next day by the U.N. Sub Commission. The government, it is claimed, had assumed, in what was considered a knee jerk reaction, that announcing elections to local government bodies in the east would immensely help its diplomatic corps in Geneva to bolster their position that things were indeed getting back to normal in Tamil areas and therefore it was not necessary to obtain the assistance of the U.N. Secretary General to find ways for resolving the conflict.

It appears however that the government had acted both in deference to the concerns of the military leadership as well as to alarms which had been raised about an imminent U.N. intervention, as it was widely believed, to strengthen the ulterior motive of effecting a *de facto* separation of the north and the east. It should be pointed out here that from the time the Canada based World Council for Global Co-operation called for U.N. Intervention, there has been a steady build up of opinion in the south that 'the whole thing' was being manipulated behind the scenes by interested parties in the west who were in cahoots with the 'secessionist expatriate Tamil lobby.' Almost overnight, the U.N. came to be portrayed as an insidious threat to Sinhala sovereignty in the island.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe and the President, Mr. D.B. Wijetunge are patently keen to show the Sinhala electorate that they are sensitive to and share in its concerns and apprehensions. Their decision to hold local government elections has to be viewed in this context. Whatever its consequences, it was clear that opinion in the south would have solidly been behind them on this issue had it transpired that the elections were in the first place held in the interests of safeguarding Sinhala sovereignty and giving the army a boost.

The Tamil parties were caught by surprise. And so were the Muslim and Tamil leaders of the U.N.P. in the eastern province. Douglas Devananda who had just begun enthusiastically to canvass support among the Colombo based Tamil groups and parties for his proposal to establish an interim council to regulate affairs in the north-east, was 'embarrassed'. He had believed that the government would, come what may, stand by his proposal. Even on the day the Elections Commissioner called for nominations, he was insisting that he was in a position to make the government change its mind! And the same morning S.L.M.C. leader Ashraff spoke in Parliament saying that the LTTE would certainly disrupt the elections and that the government will be held reponsible for the loss of lives in the ensuing violence. The Tamil parties raised strong objections as soon as the announcement was made. In the public stand they took on the issue they were all unanimous that Tamils should boycott the local polls altogether. Many Tamil leaders who happened to be in Colombo that week

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they were placed. He said that it was up to the Tamil political parties and their leaders to play that role, they all should unite to speak with one voice and they should know when to fight, when to stop fighting and when to begin talking. However, he was willing to help in any mediatory efforts and he was ever willing to visit Jaffna and talk to the Tiger leadership.

Mr. Thondaman also visited Paris where he met and spoke to the LTTE's international spokesman, Lawrence Thilakar. 'We discussed new initiatives to resume talks and break the present deadlock between the LTTE and the government', Mr. Thilakar said after his meeting with Mr. Thondaman.

The state-controlled 'Daily News' of 31 August reported quoting Minister Thondaman that he would place before the government a peace plan offered by the Tigers to end the ethnic conflict. 'The present climate appears to be conducive and there should be consensus among the parties concerned at arriving at a workable solution. Lawrence Thilakar and others of the LTTE met me in Paris during my visit there. They talked to me at length about the issues relating to the northeast and made some proposals', the paper reported quoting Mr. Thondaman.

However, Mr. Thilakar denied reports in the Colombo newspapers that he had submitted any peace proposals on behalf of the LTTE to Mr. Thondaman. However, knowledgeable sources believe that Mr. Thilakar might have reiterated the LTTE's previous offer to consider any proposals by the Sri Lankan government that offers a federal structure for the resolution of the conflict.

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said that it was going to be a sham election in which the army was in a position to determine the outcome in many places of the east.

The Tamil parties and groups in Colombo immediately sought an appointment with the Prime Minister and met him two days later, on Saturday 21. They pointed out that conditions were far from normal in the east and argued that they could not participate in any election in the northeast in the absence of a political solution to the ethnic conflict on the basis of an adequate devolution package. Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe explained the government's views on the need to hold the local government polls and informed the Tamil delegation that he would apprise the President about their concerns.

Some groups which have been operating closely with the army and hence had reason to believe that in certain areas they could 'ensure' results in their favour, were unwittingly thrown on the horns of a sticky dilemma. On the one hand if they contested the election they, in principle, would be accepting the status quo – particularly in the east where thousands are still displaced and land grabbing by Sinhalese is going on – and thereby give the government a convenient pretext for legitimising it which in turn would have meant that a political solution was redundant. This simply was political suicide. On the other hand, if they boycotted the election the government could withdraw many special privileges and financial assistance they had been receiving. In addition there were many benefits in controlling local government bodies such as building up a grass root level system of political patronage and exploiting local government resources to facilitate political projects.

By Sunday 22, it was obvious that some groups had found a way to surmount the problem. Moves were afoot to form independent groups on the part of those 'ex-militant organizations' which had been bothered by as many good reasons for contesting as there were for boycotting. There were strong rumours that the PLOTE which had been long confident of securing the Vavuniya urban council attempting to put together an independent group while moves in Batticaloa to form an independent grouping under Chezhian Perinbanayagam were attributed to behind the scene manoeuvres of the TELO and its M.P. for Batticalao, Govindan Karunakaran. The Muslim Congress leader who had denounced the idea of holding the elections in Parliament only four days earlier, decided the next day to contest as soon as the matter was gazetted and nominations were called. The leader of the EPDP said that his party would contest direct and that it would be done on the basis of an electoral seat sharing arrangement that was to be negotiated with the UNP. Asked about the confidence he had expressed, Mr. Devananda solemnly replied that there were certain 'circumstances' which he had to consider in his decision to fall in line and contest the polls in collaboration with the UNP.

The squabble ridden Batticalao branch of the UNP was also attempting hard to pull its act together. It was clear that they were determined to utilise all available resources of the state to show their leadership in Colombo that they were worthy of their salt. This was important for them because the results if favourable could increase their patronage and power and enhance prospects for lucrative appointments.

But senior UNP politicians of the east such as cabinet minister, A.R.M. Munsoor, Minister for Textile Industries, M.A. Abdul Majeed and State Minister for Shipping, M.E.H. Mahroof were not happy with the government's decision to hold the elections; the government had in the first place not consulted or even informed them.

However as soon as they got the opportunity, they informed the President that conditions were not suitable at all in the east to hold elections. In their opinion, the LTTE had ample influence in most Muslim and Tamil areas to directly or indirectly coerce and scare potential candidates. They were well aware that the LTTE had in recent times successfully re-established contact in many Muslim villages and towns in the eastern province. And most Muslim leaders including those in the UNP are evidently desirous of maintaining peace with the LTTE in the east in the long term interests of their community, by not engaging in any activity that can be interpreted as anti-Tamil. This was the main reason that prompted them to steer clear of the government's ambitious plans to hold the referendum. M.A. Abdul Majeed had also informed the President that the gradual withdrawal of the STF from several Muslim and Tamil areas in the Amparai district could make it even more difficult for people to come forward and participate in elections. The eastern province Muslim leadership of the UNP had also pointed out to the President that their members could easily be hindered by armed Tamil groups which were operating with the army. The only UNP leader from the east who had suggested that it was possible to hold the local government elections in his area was Mr. P. Dayaratne, Minister for Rehabilitation and Reconstruction. But his view was not given serious consideration not only due to the objections of Muslim leaders but because intelligence reports from most parts of the east had indicated fresh Tiger troop movements from the north to the east (the Police camp at Thampalagamam had come under attack recently to clear the main road for a contingent of about 300 Tigers to pass over into jungles leading to the northern hinterlands of the Batticaloa district).

And above all the President himself was in no position to counter the arguments put forward by the Muslim leaders in favour of postponing the elections because not even a month had passed by since he had abruptly cancelled his visit to Batticalao to attend the Mobile Presidential Secretariat for which the best and maximum security had been provided, in view of his safety. Therefore after a final and formal meeting with MPs and Minister of the eastern province – which was also attended by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and UNP General Secretary, Sirisena Cooray, the Presidential Secretariat issued a communique stating that 'The President in deference to the wishes of all the political parties and independent groups which intend contesting these elections has decided to postpone the nominations and the elections.' The President promulgated emergency regulations rescinding the notices issued earlier.

The communique added that representations had been made to the President that the 'time given for nominations and elections was inadequate. It is understandable that more time is required to reactivate the cadres, re-establish the branches and make preparations for the elections.' Needless to say the communique sounded as preposterous as the affair itself. The Sinhala nationalists in the press and in the opposition who are ever watchful of moves which in their eyes could compromise the interests of the Sinhala nation, missed the main and crucial point in the government's new stand. While calling off the elections the President also made an announcement that a referendum would be held in the northern province as well to determine whether the northeast should remain merged as a single administrative unit!

Either the government feels that this can be a good pretext for not

getting entangled in the vexatious and uncertain issue of holding a referendum in the east or it is acting in sheer confusion. If one were to assume that it may be possible to have a referendum at some point in the future in the north to decide whether people there want the east to merge with their province, then it would simply be a cake walk for the parties and groups that have for long sought an autonomous Tamil Homeland within altered constitutional parameters of Sri Lanka. In fact the EPRLF, in objecting to the idea of holding a referendum floated by army hawks through the PSC, had stated that the government should have a referendum in the north as well to seek a solution to the problem of merging the north and the east.

But there can be no doubt that if and when the Sinhala Buddhist lobby finds the catch in D.B. Wijetunge's new approach to the question of merger, it can come down heavily on him. But the fact that no polling can take place in the north may help the President keep the lobby at bay, although not for long.

In the meantime the Select Committee which met on 26th August to discuss the final draft of its report had to postpone the meeting for want of a quorum. The report sent to all 45 members of the PSC is simply an echo of the army's strategy for pacifying the east (so that it can pull out enough troops from there to recapture the north). The report recommended that 'The development of the east is a realistic approach to the process of peace.' The military leadership has been harping on this refrain since last year.

The inability of the PSC to get the required quorum is clearly a symptom of the growing apathy in ruling party circles arising from the feeling that the LTTE's military power, with which it backs its claim for Eelam, cannot be significantly impaired by the army in the near future.

The deteriorating military situation in the northeast is uppermost in everyone's mind. 'How can we sit and discuss autonomy while we are actually losing our sovereignty?' asked a UNP politician recently. In the final analysis this seems to be the mood that's causing the confusion in which the government muddles on, bearing a dangerously immense fiscal burden for prosecuting the war, though no end is in sight.

D.B. Wijetunge and Ranil Wickremesinghe are losing thei grip on the political dimension of the ethnic conflict as the army struggles without much success to prevent morale damaging setbacks and as the fear that the government may lose its naval dominance in the northern waters becomes real.

Call for Sustained & Accelerated Peace Plan to Resolve Conflict

by Ameen Izzadeen

Former United Front activist and radical Jana Vegaya Group leader Kumar Rupasinghe, now serving with a conflict resolution body named International Alert, has called on the Sri Lanka government to launch a sustained and accelerated multi-sectoral process to restore peace through a multi-ethnic vision. In an interview with 'The Sunday Times', Mr. Rupasinghe warned that the war machinery here had now developed vested interests on all sides and there were international forces which promoted war and thrives on enormous sale of arms to both sides.

There were also chauvinistic groups which wielded much power although they could not draw even 1,000 people to a meeting. In this situation, he said, the government must boldly present a peace package which must be debated, discussed and made acceptable to the people through an awareness campaign led by the mass media, NGOs and citizens groups.

Mr. Rupasinghe said he believed the Indo-Lanka Peace Accord of July 1987 negotiated by J.R. Jayewardene and Rajiv Gandhi still provided the best framework for a solution.

Regarding the recent appeal by four Nobel laureates for UN mediation in Sri Lanka'e ethnic conflict, Mr. Rupasinghe said the initial rejection of this move and the adverse publicity had created an unfortunate situation where the whole effort was misunderstood. He believed the call was presented to the Sri Lankan people in a wrong way. Excerpts from the interview.

Q: Your organisation, International Alert (IA), is mainly concerned about resolution of internal conflicts. Does it have any plans for Sri Lanka?

A: IA was founded in 1985 and its objective is peace, conflict resolution, preventive diplomacy and ensuring human rights. To achieve this goal, it collaborates with several world bodies like the UN.

IA had developed a worldwide network and one of the countries it is involved in is Sri Lanka. As far as the Sri Lankan conflict is concerned, IA has produced several reports and undertaken a fact-finding mission. It has also commissioned reports on peace and reconstruction. So there has been some involvement of IA In this country's efforts for peace. IA recognised that the conflict in Sri Lanka is an internal matter.

We would be basically involved in assisting those involved in peace making.

Q: But in the Sri Lankan conflict, the main actors are politicians and LTTE leaders. How can you assist them?

A: There are two aspects to this problem. One is the actors themselves who are parties to the conflict. The other is the environment in which the actors perform. That means there are also policy makers, NGOs and other citizen groups which could influence the peace process. The training is primarily concerned with developing a constituency for the peace process. For, it is our view that peace is not merely a question of the government and one other party, but there are so many other actors who need to be identified and frameworks should be designed to obtain their participation in the peace process.

Q: Most analysts here say whatever all these peace formulas, if there is no political will in the corridors of power, nothing will work. What is your view?

A: Political will, I define as the single-minded commitment and investment of enormous personal and material resources to bring about a negotiated settlement. In this context, since 1977, there has been a political mandate given by the people to these leaders to resolve this problem. In 1977, the UNP said in its manifesto that it would involve all sides to the conflict in an all-party conference to seek a negotiated solution. Since that time, politicians have attempted to seek a negotiated settlement. But that thrust has not been a sustained one and has not been accompanied with an accelerated peace package. But at this

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moment, I do not see a package presented with peace being debated, discussed and sold. Whatever the military option is, eventually all parties agree this is a political question requiring a political solution. There has to be a solution which should be acceptable to the majority. It should not threaten their identity. It should also be acceptable to the minority communities – Tamils and Muslims. In this regard, I think the Indo-Lanka peace accord established some of the major parameters for the solution, to the credit of J.R. Jayewardene. And it is within those parameters that a negotiated settlement is possible. I think many issues which were of concern had been sorted out. For instance, the language problem. There is no national division on the language question any more. But the unit of devolution is still an intractable problem.

Q: You said the Indo-Lanka accord provided a framework for a negotiated settlemeny. But most Lankans are highly critical of it. For example, the Muslims say they had been left out of the whole process. The accord also speaks of a temporary merger of northern and eastern provinces. But the LTTE and other Tamil parties now favour a permanent merger and a federal set-up. In the south there are forces which are not ready to compromise. In this situation, what is your view?

A: The essence of the Indo-Lanka accord provides a framework for the subjects to be discussed. It is obvious that there are many gaps which need to be filled up. But the premise of the accord is a commitment that Sri Lanka should be a plural democratic society which recognised inalienable rights of all communities to co-exist in this country. The second major contribution of the accord is the commitment by India not to interfere with the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka.

The third important aspect is the recognition by the government that there has to be a devolution package with serious consideration given to the unit of devolution.

But the proper unit of devolution and other issues like rights of the Muslims have still to be defined. Are these insoluble? How should one approach this? The LTTE has made public statements that it is interested in a federal form of government.

One important move by the government has been the select committee. The international community is waiting anxiously for the outcome of deliberations of this committee, though Tamil parties had withdrawn from it. From these deliberations we will be able to find out what the Sinhala community has to offer. The outcome may provide a basis to deal with some of the most complicated issues like the merger, irrespective of the war. Once a consensus is reached, a lot of other issues can be solved. But how do we sell this package to the people. The mass media, opinion makers, professional bodies should be effectively involved in making this package a success.

Q: The government has experimented with several approaches, like the all-party conference and the parliamentary select committee to solve the problem. But all these approaches have failed. Meanwhile the government and some sections of the media have vehemently opposed UN mediation as proposed by four Nobel prize winners. Do you think the UN could play an effective role as it had done in El Salvador and Cambodia?

A: It is extremely unfortunate that the appeal of four Nobel prize winners provoked adverse publicity here. The UN Secretary General gets petitions from various parties all the time. The way in which they were presented affected the sensibilities of the people. Because they saw this as another form of foreign interference. They also pointed out the influence of the Tamil lobby abroad. This unfortunate episode took people away from the real debate – that is how does one reach a negotiated settlement. In this context the misunderstanding of the episode is unfortunate because there is no way in which the UN could provide peacekeeping forces to this country. Firstly, because it is a serious question and there has been no request for that by the government. Moreover any such decision is taken by the Security Council. But this does not mean that the good-office function of the Secretary General should be permanently closed. But before everything there should be a package. And based on this package, the negotiations should take place. On this stage, sometimes a third party can be useful. The good office function of the Secretary General has been very effective. This has been proved in El Salvador, Liberia and many other countries. In the negotiation process, eventually one may be interested in a disinterested third party. This should be kept in mind because the subjects of negotiations, setting the agenda, time tabling, framing the agenda, sometimes require professional expertise, experience and know-how. Here the government may call upon an international body or a neutral party to provide these services. But it is important to remember that neither the UN nor any third party is interested in imposing a solution. They will be providing a technical service to help the parties to start talking.

Q: Does it mean that the UN role could help solve the Lankan problem?

A: At the moment, given the sensitivity regarding this matter, the international community is anxious to see how the government would solve this problem now that the Nobel prize winners' offer had been rejected.

This means the government has a package, and the international community is waiting to see what this package is. I should also say that the situation in Bosnia and Somalia and the UN role in these countries are quite different to what we experience in Sri Lanka.

Q: The recent UN attitude towards Bosnia has raised a credibility question in the Third World. Moreover, it is alleged that the United States is hijacking the UN. In this context, what would you say about the UN role?

A: The entire Third World is deeply hurt by the UN double standard. But one should not judge the UN by its Bosnia operation alone. Look at Cambodia, a Buddhist country. One of the most brilliant UN operations has helped Cambodia achieve relative peace. The role of the US, of course is a cause for concern. Undue influence by the US on the UN has given rise to a deep suspicion that the UN was merely a tool in US foreign policy. But, I think this view is too simplistic. There is much debate taking place in the UN on the democratisation of the UN system, expansion of the Security Council and a standing peace-keeping force under UN command.

Also we must not forget that the UN is the only body we have internationally, interested in the collective security of all people. In that sense the democratisation of the UN is very important. Also one cannot deny the role of the non-governmental organisations in the international level.

The UN has introduced the concept of preventive diplomacy. That is how to prevent a war from breaking out. Here International Alert and other NGOs are helping the UN with the involvement of citizens-based groups and professional bodies – in a true global agenda.

Q: You stress on the role of citizens groups. In Sri Lanka, we had citizens committees in the war-torn areas and nobody took them seriously.

A: The biggest problem in war-torn

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societies is that eventually the civilians of both sides become passive. Some leave the counrtry, some get internally displaced, and some continue their lives as if there had never been a war. So there is a fragmentation of society during war. In the meantime the war machinery continues to reproduce itself overtime. It develops vested interests of all sides. There are international forces which promote the war-making efforts of which little is talked about. We are talking about intervention for peace but we ignore the other aspect – intervention for war. These forces thrive on enormous sale of arms to both sides. There is a strong link between parties to a conflict and the illicit drug network. There are various parties inside the country, who are making profits. These forces have to be identified. There is a lobby for war-making. The President the other day admitted that 30 billion rupees was spent on the war effort last year. Calculate this sum for ten years. Add the money the other side has spent on this. Just imagine, how this enormous sum could have been invested, for the education and employment generation and for the development of the country. The money could have been invested in promoting national harmony, in promoting multi-linguality – teaching all the three languages to the youth – in changing text books so that they could reflect the multi-plurality of this country. This money could have been invested in programmes to ensure that violence would never tear this country apart again. Unfortunately the peace process does not have all these resources. Therefore it is fragmented. It is sporadic. There is no sustainable accelerated effort to bring peace. The peace process should be multi-sectoral. The business community, the entertainment world and other strategic constituencies should also be deeply involved in promoting peace. It is only then that the balance can be changed and peace will become fashionable.

Q: What is your view on the role of the media in conflict resolution?

A: Sri Lanka is a highly literate country. We read newspapers, listen to the radio and watch television. I would say Sri Lankans are a media-responsive society. On the other hand, people in general in Sri Lanka are really tired of this war. They basically want to go about doing their everyday business and seeing to their children's education and so on. But somehow a section of the media continues to be blackmailed by a small segment of the population who do not really reflect the aspirations of the entire people. I mean the more extreme chauvinistic forces. They are not in a position to gather more than 1,000 people in a public meeting. But they have undue influence. They do influence some of the policy-makers. This problem needs to be seriously addressed. How can an alternative, multi-ethnic vision be promoted in this country? This is the challenge the media faces.

Q: You also talked about text books. Some allege that history books in Sri Lanka are inflammatory and kindle racial hatred. What would you say?

A: In the long-term, the text book is the primary source of information for children. It is mainly through the text book, that children are socialised into their communities. There is a struggle over the text books in many nations. Take for instance, the United States, where the black community is challenging the Anglo-Saxon interpretation of American history. Because of this, history is being re-written in the United States.

The black community wants their contribution to art, science, economy, music and other fields to be told in text books. People there today question the consequences of the Columbus episode of America. Even in India, the authorities are reviewing the text books for the sake of national harmony. I would suggest, that for the long-term peace building process between communities, there be a re-examination of the myths which surround our history whether it is the concept of chosen people, whether it is the concept of demonising the other or how we detail the traumas of the people, how we interpret wars between people in the long-distant past. All these things need to be re-examined and re-evaluated when a country is moving from war to peace.

NEWS REVIEW

★ **THE TAMIL TIGERS** have rejected the proposal to establish an 'interim administrative council' to run the war-torn Northeast of Sri Lanka. Their Paris-based international spokesman, Lawrence Thilakar, said: 'The government is trying to install this mechanism to achieve the objective of finding a military solution with the assistance of anti-LTTE groups'.

The non-LTTE Tamil parties and groups and some Muslim politicians have recently been raising the question of installing an 'interim administrative council' to run the Northeast which is currently directly ruled by Colombo through a Governor appointed by the President after the EPRLF-dominated provincial administration collapsed following the departure of the IPKF and the elected Provincial Council was dissolved shortly thereafter at the behest of the LTTE which was then having negotiations with the government of former President Premadasa. The mainly Colombo-based non-LTTE Tamil groups which find themselves politically marginalised as the fighting between the LTTE and government forces continue unabated for over three years are seeking to regain a foothold and reassert their position in the Tamil areas through the vehicle of an interim council in which they hope to play a leading role.

While the EPRLF has remained firm in its anti-government stance, other Tamil groups like PLOTE, TELO and EPDP have aligned themselves with government forces in militarily combatting the LTTE. Douglas Devananda, leader of the pro-government Eelam Peoples' Democratic Front, said: 'We should set up a council comprising representatives of political parties active in the region to run the province and restore law and order so that elections could be held subsequently.' The Speaker of parliament, Mr. M.H. Mohamed, also has raised the prospect of setting up such an interim Council.

As the military stalemate continues in the fighting between government forces and the LTTE, it is believed that the government has been giving active consideration to the proposal, but has not come to any conclusion. Political circles both in Colombo and in the Tamil areas are sceptical of the practicality of the move. They observe that the militarily dominant LTTE which claims to be the 'sole representative' of the Tamil people will not permit such an interim council to function.

In the meantime, the island's Minister of Constitutional Affairs, Mr. K.N. Choksy, has ruled out the proposal on the grounds that there is no provision in the Constitution to establish such a Council.

★ **THE BISHOP OF CHILAW,** Rev. Marcus Fernando, warning that the Voice of America project was turning Iranawila into a 'Punchi Americawa' (Little America') and a super power colony, has appealed to the government to suspend all VOA operations and place before the people the facts

regarding the VOA project it had signed with the US government.

In a statement issued on behalf of the Chilaw Diocese Pastoral Council, the Bishop also called upon all people of goodwill who cared for our country and loved our poor people to take note of the serious developments at Iranawila and respond meaningfully.

The statement said that the government had paid no heed to several months of protests and eventually the VOA work was initiated. Now its true face was emerging with the cutting down of several thousands of coconut palms in full bearing, the large scale infrastructure works, the increased presence of foreigners, interference with the fishing rights of the people, the strict security measures barring outsiders from approaching the no-go zone, the break-neck speed at which the operations were going on made everyone feel that the actual reality of the VOA was far removed from the innocent sounding 'Relay Station' previously spoken of by the concerned parties.

The Bishop disclosed that an official of the VOA had asked the parish priest to inform his people that they should not use the waterway leading from Thoduwawa to Pambala lagoon as it was the property of the VOA. This was the area used by poor fishermen for fishing. Many fishermen had complained that VOA staff had chased them away when fishing as it was the 'security zone' of the VOA.

Many families had complained that parts of their properties were to be acquired and that high tension cable lines were to be installed over their properties. There was a persistent rumour that a high-powered plant for producing electricity with environmental ill-effects was to be set up in the Madampe area.

★ **A DRAFT RESOLUTION** sponsored by four expert members (France, Belgium, Norway and USA) of the United Nations Humans Rights Sub-Commission which met last month in Geneva sought to make adverse references to the human rights record of the Sri Lankan government and condemn the Tamil Tigers for arbitrary executions and detentions and torture. The draft also urged the government and the parties in conflict to enter into a cessation of hostilities and to seek the 'good offices' of the Secretary General of the UN to resolve the ongoing ethnic conflict through negotiations.

The move at Geneva received wide publicity in the Colombo newspapers, some of them concentrated only on that part of the text referring to the LTTE while condemning the suggestion to involve the UN Secretary General in peace efforts as 'unwarranted intervention in the internal affairs of the country'. Editorial comments particularly in the state-controlled newspapers were vitriolic in their condemnation of the alleged attempts by western countries to impose their own standards of human rights on 'poor third world countries' like Sri Lanka.

Although experienced observers in Geneva felt that the draft resolution (which was eventually withdrawn by the sponsors) did not have any chance of being adopted by the 26-Member Sub-Commission, an anxious Sri Lankan delegation led by the island's Attorney General, Tilak Marapane made frantic efforts in lobbying other members of the Sub-Commission. In Colombo, the newly reappointed Foreign Minister, Sahul Hameed summoned heads of foreign missions of countries whose experts were on the Sub-Commission with a view to influencing the outcome in Geneva.

Strange as it may seem, the Sri Lankan delegation had an unexpected ally in the LTTE representative at Geneva who too campaigned among NGOs against the draft resolution because of its critical reference made to them. In responding to the statement made by Tilak Marapane to the Sub-Commission that his country was seeking negotiated peaceful resolution of the conflict in the island through the Parliamentary Select Committee process, the London office of LTTE in a statement said: 'The Committee mechanism provides the Sri Lankan government with a useful cover of 'reasonableness' for international consumption, whilst it continues its genocidal military operations against the Tamil people.' The Tigers also denied charges by Mr. Marapane that they had turned down offers by the UNHCR to open a safe passage across the lagoon in the northern Jaffna peninsula to enable transport of essential supplies to the people and for them to travel to and from the mainland.

Accusing the Sri Lankan government of responding to the LTTE calls for direct negotiations and to other mediatory efforts by other interested parties, the LTTE statement added: 'The leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Velupillai Pirabakaran, has declared that the LTTE was prepared to consider a federal structure with the Northeast forming the Tamil homeland. But it is clear that the government of Sri Lanka is bent on dividing the Tamil homeland in the Northeast. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam have repeatedly made their position clear – if the government persists in its determination to subjugate the Tamil people, the Tamils will have no alternative but to fight to restore their own sovereign state.'

★ **SPECULATION IS RIFE** relating to two top leaders of the LTTE. Gopalaswamy Mahendrarajah (alias Mahathaya), the deputy leader of the Tamil Tigers and the leader of its political wing Peoples Front of Liberation Tigers (PFLT), and Yogaratnam Yogi (alias Dilip Yogi) who held the post of General Secretary of PFLT.

A Reuter report datelined 30 August said that 'Gopalaswamy Mahendrarajah, former deputy leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), was taken on August from his home in the rebel-controlled north on the orders of Velupillai Prabakaran. Mahattaya (Mahedrarajah's nom de guerre) and 100 of his supporters were arrested in 10 different locations in the north on August 2 and 3', according to a spokesman for the government's northern military forces. Mahendrarajah had been kept under observation at his home for the past several months before his recent arrest. The spokesman who did not want to be named said that his information was based on 'army intelligence'.

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THE TAMIL NATIONAL QUESTION IN SRI LANKA: SOME REFLECTIONS

Obstacles to Peace[1]

by N. Shanmugaratnam

The Lankan society is in the grip of a protracted crisis which has become militarised. Many have observed that Sri Lanka is at war with itself. In fact, there are several wars going on at the same time in Sri Lanka. The war between the state and the LTTE in the North-East has been going on for more than ten years. There are the constant internecine armed conflicts between different Tamil militant groups. There are ethnic pogroms unleashed by Tamil militant groups. The government has been at war with the JVP for some years. The JVP was at war with not only the government but the left movement in the South as well. Thousands of people have died, most of them innocent civilians. The population of the North-East has dropped from 1.7 million in 1987 to 900,000 in 1992, i.e. it has dwindled by about 47% in a matter of five years. Of the 800,000 who are not there, about 50,000 are dead or missing, 500,000 have left the country and most of the others are living outside the region in refugee camps. The people of the North-East are suffering from an inhuman economic embargo imposed by the government besides the loss of their livelihood due to the war. In the South, thousands have died or disappeared. The state and the violent anti-state forces have terrorised the Lankan masses and silenced them. Our society has been brutalised and barbarised.

Understandably, peace is the first thing many people yearn for in such a situation. But peace in Sri Lanka is inconceivable without solutions to the conflicts which have become militarised. This is a basic premise for any movement genuinely concerned with peace in Sri Lanka. Thus, any moralist condemnation of violence *per se* without a demand for just solutions to the basic problems of our society is empty and meaningless. We cannot get anywhere near peace merely by condemning violence if we have no stand on the causes of the violence and the possible solutions to the problems. This paper deals with the national question and the ethnic conflict generated by the Lankan governments' failure to solve it. It begins with a summary of the author's main thesis on the obstacles to peace in Sri Lanka and proceeds to elaborate the main points and concludes with a call for more vigorous multi-ethnic mass movements for secularism, people's democracy and peace.

The main obstacles to peace in Sri Lanka lie in the communalisation of society and the state and the consequent transformation of the national question into an ethnic conflict and a confrontation between the Tamils and the state. The militarisation of the national question is a continuation of the politics of ethno-nationalism by violent means. Sinhala Buddhism, the ruling ethno-nationalism, has de-secularised and communalised the state at the cost of the latter's loss of legitimacy among the Tamils. In the North-East, the de-secularised Sri Lankan state, is confronted by a nationalist movement whose leadership too is communalist, authoritarian and militarist. Militarism has become a common creed of the parties involved in the war.

De-militarisation and resolution of the ethnic conflict are inseparably linked not only to a formula based on a full recognition of the rights of the Tamil and Muslim peoples but to the secularisation of the state and the public domain and decommunalisation of civil society. All obstacles to the achievement of these conditions are obstacles to peace in Sri Lanka. At a more fundamental political economic level, they are rooted in the uneven and extremely weak development process and the social, regional and ethnic disparities it has engendered under the auspices of the state. This implies that a more dynamic and equitable development process is an essential need to ensure peace in the long run. A peace process presupposes an unconditional cease-fire and an atmosphere of mutual trust. Past experience shows that even these preliminary conditions are hard to achieve and sustain. There is no third party with sufficient credibility and stature to facilitate the fulfillment of these preconditions. The peace movement in Sri Lanka is still unable to fill this role. The constraints that limit the growth of the peace movement are themselves part of the internal barriers to the resolution of the ethnic conflict and to peace. In such a situation, externally imposed solutions are not likely to succeed as shown by the fate of the Indo-Lanka Accord. Among the more basic requirements to promote peace are mass movements for secularism and multi-ethnic people's democracy. A major long-term political and cultural task of these movements should be the creation of an alternative hegemonic consciousness, by challenging the currently popular communalist world views.

Communalization of Politics, Civil Society and the State

It is widely believed in our subcontinent that communalism is a colonial legacy that continues. However, it is in the post-independence period that communalization of politics and society became a major process. We may be justified in blaming the British for starting the dirty business of communal politics, but we cannot go on fooling ourselves by blaming them for its continuation and metamorphosis into militant and barbaric ethno-nationalist forms in the post-independence period. Communalization transforms a multi-ethnic society into a hotbed of competing communal identities whose ideological consolidation relies on targeting the 'Other' as the 'real enemy'. As this leads to an unequal distribution of power between the different communal blocs, there is the real danger of those with power victimising the powerless. The Lankan society has become an extreme case of a vicious circle of communalization and imagined enemies, beginning with the majority Sinhala Buddhists and inevitably engulfing the Tamils and Muslims.

Historically, from the latter part of the 19th century, Sinhala Buddhist identity was defined not only with reference to some 'internal' attributes based on myths of origin and the uniqueness of Sinhala Buddhists, but also by targeting the non-Sinhala Buddhists, in the country as aliens and enemies. In the days of British colonialism, Sinhala Buddhist nationalism displayed a peculiar duality: it was more readily willing to compromise with the British imperialists but was hostile toward the minorities – the 'Others' within. A manifestation of this hostility was the anti-Muslim riots of 1915. The revival of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism in the post-independence period was catalysed by targeting the Tamils as 'Outsiders' and as the major threat to the progress and well-being of the Sinhalese.[2]

The dominant politics of post-independence Sri Lanka can be called the politics of ethno-nationalism. The majority ethno-nationalist parties have been utilising the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy

and universal franchise to further the communalization of the Sinhala society as a short-cut to power. The disenfranchisement of the upcountry Tamils was the first major instance of using the parliamentary system to manipulate the electoral balance of forces in ethnic terms to enhance the relative strength of the Sinhala electorate. In hindsight, it signalled the coming of a powerful current of ethno populism which would sweep the South and systematically undermine the politics of class and the left movement, and promote a narrow ethnic consciousness.

In 1956, the newly elected MEP (Mahajana Eksath Peramana) government initiated two key processes: desecularisation of the state and statisation of the economy. Indeed, these were the major instruments of a larger project of fashioning an integral system of governance to serve the following aims:

a) reconstructing and consolidating an exclusivist Sinhala Buddhist national identity, as co-terminus with a Sri Lankan identity. In effect, this meant the making of a Sinhala Buddhist state.

b) meeting the social and economic aspirations of the propertyless (or petty bourgeois) but politically influential Sinhala nationalist intelligentsia.[3]

c) asserting a popular anti-imperialist position within the ethno-nationalist discourse, and

d) implementation of distributive social policies to maintain popular support for the regime.

This scheme, described by some as 'Sinhala Buddhist socialism', was intended to operate within a parliamentary democratic framework with the support of the Sinhala constituency. Obviously, it relied on the direct subordination of the economic to the political – as it happened in the 1956-77 period. However, as discussed below, the ethnic and class conflicts generated and/or exacerbated by this grand project contributed to the authoritarianism, state terrorism and civil war that unfolded in the post-1977 period.

The SLFP (Sri Lanka Freedom Party) – the leading partner of the MEP – under the leadership of the late Mr. Bandaranaike entered the election campaign in 1956 with the promise of ushering in the 'Era of the Common Man' by giving the language and religion of the Sinhalese people their 'due place' and by granting social justice to the Sinhala masses. The deprivations suffered by the Sinhalese people were attributed to the continuing dominance of English as the official language and the concentration of power in the hands of the English-speaking elite. Minorities, particularly the Tamils, were seen as beneficiaries of the 'divide and rule' policies of the British. The appeal of Bandaranaike's ethno-populism was enhanced by its social justice platform which rested on a pledge to increase social welfare and provide employment to the unemployed. However, it is the articulation of the social justice question in an evocative ethno-nationalist rhetoric that gave the MEP the advantage. It may be recalled that in the same year the Trotskyist LSSP (Lanka Sama Samaja Party) made a bid for parliamentary power by contesting a majority of the seats with a manifesto which promised greater social justice. Nevertheless, it was the MEP that swept the polls. The difference between the LSSP and MEP seems to lie in the passionate ethno-populism of the latter. Bandaranaike successfully used an ethno-populist ideology to cement a broad Sinhala Buddhist constituency across classes.[4] It is this power to enable a cross-class, nationalist integration that subsequently made Sinhala Buddhism a hegemonist ideology in Sinhala (civil) society and set the main parameters of legitimation of state power.

Along with these developments came the rise of the state-led economy based mainly on nationalization and state monopolies. The expansion of the state sector at the expense of the private sector and the regulatory policies created antagonisms between the two. The private sector that remained was reduced to an appendage that depended on the political patronage of the ruling party. The main beneficiaries of these policies belonged to the Sinhala petty and middle bourgeoisie and the elite stratum of the state bureaucracy. The latter came partly from the propertyless intelligentsia which played an active intellectual role in reconstituting Sinhala nationalist identity with a liberal use of anti-imperialist rhetoric. Statisation of the economy gave the political elite control over vital resources and their allocation through public policy. With banks becoming a state monopoly, capital lending to private borrowers became subject to political patronage. The political elite had almost full control over distribution of jobs in the public sector which was the main source of waged-employment for the new skilled and unskilled job seekers. Another key resource under their control was state-owned agricultural land which they distributed largely according to political criteria to landless and middle peasants.[5]

All governments continued the policy of state-aided Sinhala settlements in the North-East with the intent of changing the ethnic composition of some areas in favour of the Sinhala electorate and to the political detriment of the Tamil and Muslim communities. Then there were the other forms of discrimination against the minorities in public sector employment and higher educational opportunities which affected the lower middle-class Tamils of the North most seriously. The Tamil and Muslim business communities felt severely constrained due to lack of political patronage to obtain capital credit and business licenses. Overall, the cumulative effects of official policies and practices led to the political, cultural and psychological alienation of the Tamils from the Lankan mainstream.

All these provided a sustained impetus for the rapid communalization of the Tamil and Muslim societies. The communalization of the North-East Tamils took a qualitative turn with their ethno-territorialisation initiated by the Federal Party (FP) in 1952. This gained momentum after 1956 with the rise of Sinhala Buddhism as the ruling ethno-nationalism. FP's Tamil nationalism tended to exclude the Muslims while paying lip-service to a larger unity of Tamils and Muslims in the North-East as a people with a common homeland. The Muslims sought a communal identity on the basis of their religion. In more recent times, the anti-Muslim violence of the Thamil Eelam chauvinists has embittered and alienated the Muslims in the North-East and further reinforced the communalization of that society. The Lankan society has become politically partitioned into four communalised constituencies along a hierarchy according to their electoral strengths: Sinhalese, North-East Tamils, Muslims, and up-country Tamils. Of course, each communal bloc has its internal hierarchies, sub-divisions and power struggles. With the perversion of the democratic principles of 'rule by majority' into rule by Sinhala majority, the ethnic minorities were relegated to the status of permanent losers, or of temporary clients of the Sinhala ruling party, in the game of parliamentary power. Once in the political arena, Sinhala and Tamil ethno-nationalism had each other to feed on. Of course, the former was, and is, privileged as the ruling ethno-nationalism.

Barriers to Resolution Institutionalised

The desecularisation of the state exacted a heavy price from the Lankan polity. The state progressively lost

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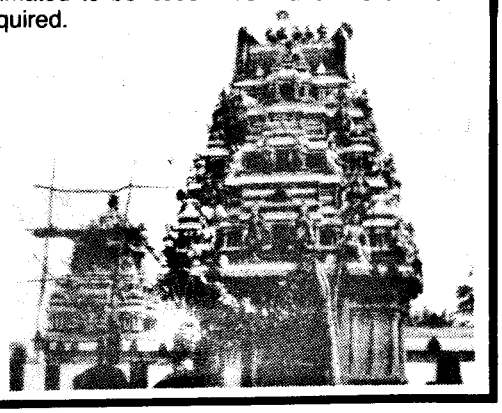

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its legitimacy among the Tamils. This loss of legitimacy became almost total in the North-East with the militarisation of the ethnic conflict when the Tamil people saw that the state's military was completely Sinhalese and behaving like an army of occupation. The desecularised state, presenting itself as the Sinhala Buddhist state. Lost all semblance of neutrality and the authority and autonomy to rise above the Sinhala electorate and enforce a solution to the national question. It was evident, even before the militarisation of the conflict that, on the national question, the state had become a creature of Sinhala ethnonationalism. This was seen in practice on more than one occasion. Whenever a ruling party attempted to redress Tamil grievances through an agreement with the Tamil political leadership, the main Sinhala opposition party was able to mobilise Sinhalese public opinion against it by branding it a betrayal of the interests of the Sinhala Buddhists. In response the ruling party of the time chose not to use the state power at its disposal to defend and implement the agreement so as not to lose popularity in its own constituency.

This happened as early as 1957 when the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact was signed. At that time, J.R. Jayewardena was able to mobilise the Buddhist clergy and masses of the Sinhala people against the Pact and have it unilaterally torn apart by Bandaranaike. It happened again in 1965 to the Dudley Senanayake-Chelvanayakam Pact, but this time it was Mrs. Bandaranaike's turn to raise the chauvinist cry of betrayal of the Sinhala nation and Buddhist religion. In 1966, we witnessed the sad and shocking revelation that the main left parties in parliament, LSSP and CP (Moscow), had also succumbed to Sinhala Buddhist hegemony. These two parties, which were bastions of secularism for a long time, had become infected by communalization. Their leader's participation in the march against the second Pact symbolised the capitulation of the left to ethnopopulism and the collapse of the main bulwark against communalism in Sri Lanka.

The failure of the governments concerned to implement the two Pacts clearly showed that obstacles to a resolution of the national question had become structural due to communalization. The political parties seeking power competed for support within the communalised constituency of the majority ethnie. The ruling party related to the minorities not in the liberal democratic spirit of a 'government of all people' but as the government of and by the communalised majority. Any agreement between the government and the Tamil leadership faced the prospect of being interpreted by the Sinhala opposition as a conspiracy hatched in secrecy to the detriment of the Sinhala nation. In both instances, the opponents of the Pacts were able to mobilise effective resistance from below from among the Sinhalese population by a campaign of disinformation.

In its election manifesto of 1977, the UNP pledged to find a lasting solution to the ethnic problem but failed even to take the first step toward a negotiated settlement in spite of the unprecedented four-fifth majority it had. The UNP government used its parliamentary power to introduce a new constitution and a presidential system. These were major changes indeed. However, the ruling party was not prepared to introduce any legislative changes to accommodate the aspirations of the Tamils. The reason was the fear that the SLFP and the other Sinhala nationalist groups might accuse the government of 'selling out the Sinhala nation'. However, given the government economic policy, a solution to the national question and ethnic peace should have been a high priority. Indeed, later events showed that this was more urgent than the constitutional changes introduced by the government if it was reallay concerned to create an enabling political environment for its economic policy. However, it was in the post-1977 period that the militarisation of the ethnic conflict was established into a full-scale war in the North-East.

The events of July 1983 highlighted an inherent contradiction in the government between the imperatives of its new economic policy and the ideological hegemony of Sinhala Buddhism. The former required not only the freeing of the economic realm from direct state control via privatization and free markets, but an ideological decommunalisation of civil society in general. The latter was needed to promote confidence in the government among the private business people irrespective of ethnicity or nationality. This also demanded the secularisation of the state to restore to it a sufficient degree of neutrality and enhance its authority as the enforcer of law and order and protector of private property and, the interests of the capitalist class irrespective of ethnic or any other non-class considerations.

But history does not move so neatly, so mechanistically from the economic to the political as dictated by the former. In reality, more often than not, politics commands the economic. This was revealed by the events of July 1983 when the contradiction between the economic and the ideological as stated above exploded in the form of an anti-Tamil pogrom.[6] It soon became abundantly clear that the systematic destruction of the means of production and other properties owned by Tamils, and hence the demolition of a part of the country's economic base, was engineered by forces within the government with the connivance of the state's agents of law and order. This clearly showed that the ruling party, was still deeply communalised and the state remained de-secularised and, therefore, could be used by ethnonationalist forces to undermine the economic policies of their own government. The ethnic violence of the post-1977 period cannot be fully explained without reference to the above contradiction. Until that time, the economy was 'closed' and state led. There was no political economic compulsion for the secularisation of the state or decommunalization of civil society (or, in other words, the dismantling of the integral system of governance of 1956-77) until the adoption of the liberal economic policy. But what happened after 1977?

Here was a government that had just introduced a liberal economic policy and was busy dismantling the old structures of protectionism and controls. It was offering special economic incentives to promote private investment irrespective of the ethnicity or nationality of the investors. Tamil and Muslim businessmen welcomed the new economic policy as it enabled freer competition and provided easier access to credit. Exuding a new confidence, they praised old J.R. Liberals believed that their dream of freeing the economy from state control would now be realised sooner or later, although they did not have the courage to openly demand the real separation of the state from the Sinhala Buddhist establishment. For a moment, it appeared as if J.R. Jayawardena was an enlightened bourgeois leader who wanted to take the economy onto the road of high growth rates and the country away from the era of ethno-populism and bigotry into the new world of capitalist competition and rationality. There were those who hoped that if authoritarianism was necessary to run Sri Lanka, then Jayawardena would choose to follow Singapore's Lee Kwan Yew and adopt the tough measures needed to maintain the rule of law, 'discipline' the Lankan workers and promote economic growth.

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The export sector did not perform as expected but the economy's growth record impressed the main donors in the 1977-83 period. In Colombo, many believed that the imperatives of economic growth and capital accumulation were asserting themselves over the parochial, populist anti-growth values perpetuated by the regimes of the past. Thanks to UNP's economic policy, Colombo-based Tamil businessmen found new opportunities of accumulation. They were not handicapped anymore by the lack of political patronage as the capital market had become liberalised. Though disturbed by the anti-Tamil riots of August 1977, they believed that the government would maintain law and order in Colombo to attract private investment. Of course, in the North-East, it was another reality. There, the government's ethnic policy was leading to a military confrontation which had its repercussions in Colombo in July 1983 when the economic lost out to the ideological and shattered the optimism of the Tamil capitalists and middle class in Colombo. It was a demonstration of the relative autonomy of the hegemonist ideology.

Notes:

[1] Paper presented at the Conference for Promotion of Peace in Sri Lanka, 3-4 April 1993, Toronto, Canada.

[2] For a collection of analytical works on the history of ethno-nationalism see Social Scientists Association, *Ethnicity and Social Change in Sri Lanka,* Colombo 1984. Committee for Rational developments, Sri Lanka: *The Ethnic Conflict,* Delhi 1984. Jayawardena V. Kumari, *Ethnic and Class Conflict in Sri Lanka,* 1985.

[3] Propertyless in the sense of not owning means of production to exploit labour and accumulate capital. The activist nationalist intellectuals came largely from petty bourgeois or lower middle class background.

[4] The late S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike summed up this cross-class bloc in his famous slogan of the 'five great forces': Peasants -Workers -Buddhist monks -Teachers- Indigenous physicians. With the support of the rural buddhist monks, Sinhala school teachers and ayurvedic Physicians, the traditional opinion makers and leaders in the countryside, and a stirring ethno-populism, Bandaranaike was able to reach the Sinhala rural masses who largely remained unpoliticised for a long time. Indeed, in any society, at the grass-roots, the traditional leaders are the architects of ethnic identity. The buddhist monk and school teacher were the traditional 'organic intellectuals' in rural society. Bandaranaike co-opted them to reconstitute Sinhala Buddhist nationhood for a major political project. He was also shrewd and imaginative enough to form a united front of all the Sinhala ethno-nationalist political formations and raise the 'right slogans' such as 'Sinhala only' and Rights to the Common Man'. His eloquence and charisma proved to be great assets for his party. Moreover, the presence in the MEP of the Viplavakari LSSP (a breakaway group from the LSSP) led by Philip Gunawardena, regarded as a founding father of the socialist movement in Lanka added to the radical image of the united front. The failure of the Lankan left to politicise and organise the peasantry, turned out to be Bandaranaike's populism which promised to uplift the downtrodden Sinhalese.

[5] It would not be correct to assume that the government economic policies were always aimed at benefiting Sinhalese only. For instance, the import substitution policies of 1970-77 benefited the Tamil farmers of the North. Also Tamils and Muslims benefited from subsidies on food and transport and from free education and health.

[6] Gunasinghe discusses some of the important class and ideological dimensions of this contradiction in 'Open Economy and Its Impact on Ethnic Relations in Sri Lanka', in Committee for Rational Development, 1984 Ibid.

Navy Suffers Major Losses

Rs. 300 Million Super Dvora Gunboat Sunk by Tigers

The Sri Lankan Navy suffered a major military loss when 'Sea Tigers' of the LTTE sank an Israeli built Super Dvora fast patrol craft, estimated to cost Rs. 300 million, on 29 August off the coast of Point Pedro in northern Jaffna. Before the craft sank the Tigers seized the weaponry on board the vessel which included two 23mm cannons, one fifty calibre gun, sophisticated communications equipment, personal weapons and a large quantity of ammunition. Of the twelve navy men on board, 11 were killed and one was reportedly captured by the Tigers.

In previous encounters with the Navy at Kilali in the lagoon separating the Jaffna peninsula and the mainland, the Tigers attacked and reportedly destroyed two naval boats on 25 August. One officer and 8 men on board the first vessel were killed. In the second encounter, one officer was reportedly killed and five others wounded, and the Tigers got away with two fifty calibre guns fitted to the vessel.

The following report in connection with the sinking of the boat appeared in 'The Sunday Times' (Colombo), on 5 September.

An Israeli built Super Dvora fast patrol craft, one of the most efficient vessels in the Sri Lanka Navy's fleet, was cutting through the blue waters of the Indian Ocean, North East of Sri Lanka on a calm, sunny morning, last Sunday (August 29).

Having left Trincomalee, the patrol craft which has the capacity to carry missiles, was barely an hour ahead of COMNORTH area – the parameters which came under the purview of Sri Lanka Navy's Commander in charge of the Northern Sector.

The clock was closing in on 9.30am when the radio in the Operations Room of the Naval Base at Karainagar, the Navy's main installation in the North, crackled. It was a warning from the Sri Lanka Army base in Palaly – the LTTE was poised to launch an attack on a naval craft. Intercepts of messages had bared the plans although where exactly the assault was to take place was not known.

The men at Karainagar acted promptly by alerting naval craft within their area command. Evidently COMNORTH was unaware that the Super Dvora was heading into their area to join the fleet.

Hardly an hour later, the Super Dvora came under attack by Sea Tigers. There were nine crew members including four officers. Also aboard were three Navy men, all attached to the Navy outpost at Kankesanthurai, who were being given a lift.

Of the 12, all were killed except one who has been taken POW (prisoner of war). His identity is not known and this has fuelled hopes in the kith and kin of those who were aboard the Super Dvora that the survivor is their dearly beloved one.

Security top brass are still unaware how the Super Dvora came under attack and sank later. The only chance of their knowing the real truth would be if and when the Navy POW is released from captivity by the LTTE.

The Tigers had their own version of the incident. According to them, four of their Sea Tiger boats mounted with fifty calibre (five zero) guns virtually surrounded the Super Dvora whilst one of them packed with explosives, surged ahead and rammed it. Two Sea Tigers, Major Puvindran and Captain Manirasan, were killed in this suicide mission.

The only witness to the incident, besides those of the two warring factions, were the crew of a cargo vessel which had carried food and essential cargo from Colombo to Point Pedro.

They were a long distance away but saw balls of fire and dark clouds rising skywards during the incident.

Whilst the deaths of the two Sea Tigers are known, highly placed Navy officials discount the LTTE version as 'highly impossible'. One senior official said: 'The officers and men in the Super Dvora would not have permitted all these vessels to come near them. It is more likely that just one boat rammed it during what appears to be some diversion.'

The Tigers seized the weaponry on board the Super Dvora before it sank. They included the two 23 mm cannons, one fifty-calibre (five zero) gun, personal weapons and ammunition.

Evidence of this came in the form of a front page photograph in 'Eela Natham' of August 30. It showed LTTE leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran inspecting the weapons on Sunday afternoon, the same day the incident occurred. 'Eela Natham' the tabloid Tamil daily printed in Jaffna is one of the official organs of the LTTE.

Once again, through intercepts, the security forces learnt that the attack on the Super Dvora, an opportunity target, had been ordered by head of LTTE's Sea Tigers wing, Soosai, apparently in retaliation for a security forces offensive on Thursday (August 26). It seemed a cycle of tit for tats.

On August 25, Sea Tigers had launched an attack on naval craft in the waters of the Jaffna lagoon, the No Go Zone through which the LTTE operates a hazardous boat service ferrying civilians to and from the peninsula for prohibitive sums of money. Fuller details of this incident, just an hour after midnight, will never be known.

According to sketchy details now available, a boat loaded with explosives is said to have rammed a 40 foot naval craft patrolling off Kilaly, a mooring point South West of the Jaffna peninsula. One officer and four sailors were killed. Four more were reported missing but their bodies were discovered later bringing the death toll to nine.

Undaunted by this attack, men aboard a second 40 foot naval vessel docked into one of their bays, took in sufficient ammunition and moved swiftly to confront the enemy. In the ensuing encounter, one officer was killed and five others were wounded. This boat too was hit.

The Sea Tigers got away with two fifty calibre (five zero) guns during this confrontation.

The Kilaly incident came when General Hamilton Wanasinghe, General Officer Commanding the Joint Operations Command was away on leave. Navy Commander Vice Admiral Mohan Samarasekera promptly flew to the area of the incident to make a full assessment of the situation. He conferred with Army and Air Force top brass in the Northern Command.

The result was a counter-offensive on Thursday (August 26). SLAF aircraft bombed LTTE targets. This included over 50 boats and known landing points. Troops also undertook ground offensives in Madagal, Elephant Pass (towards Iyyakatchchi) and Pooneryn, Soosai, it appeared, was reacting to this.

The past months of the Eelam War II appears to have taken a somewhat serious turn compared to many previous months. This is particularly in terms of the prohibitively costly losses for the security forces and the correspondingly high gains of weaponry by the terrorists.

First it was on the ground at Janakapura Camp on July 25. An estimated Rs. 50 million worth of military hardware and other material were lost. A Military Court of Inquiry, however, fixed the loss at Rs. 30 million.

And now the loss of the Super Dvora alone is over Rs. 300 million not to mention the cannons, fifty calibre guns, personal weapons and the patrol craft – a grim reminder that the prolonged war is continuing to bleed the economy and now increasingly underscores the urgent need for more concerted and decisive action.

'Sinhalese and Tamils Should be Equal Partners and Share Political Power for Solution'

Excerpts from an interview with the former Chief Minister of North-East Provincial Council and EPRLF Leader, Mr. A. Varatharaja Perumal by the 'Sunday Island' correspondent, Prabath Sahabandu.

How do you view Sri Lankan politics from a distance in India?

Yes, it is true that I have been living as a political exile since March 1990. But before I proceed, I wish to make this following clarification. I have been constantly briefed by my Party of the situation back home, either in the form of reports, or through direct contacts with our Secretary-General, Comrade Suresh Premachandran and other senior Party members, who visit me whenever possible. In addition, I also have access to the Sri Lankan mainstream papers. Therefore, my protracted absence from Sri Lanka does not mean that I am living in isolation or immune to developments in Sri Lanka.

Now getting back to your question, what bothers me most is the cult of violence which seems to have got into an uncontrolled spin. Political assassinations and violent deaths of political leaders, under 'mysterious' circumstances, has come to characterize Sri Lankan politics.

In the North-East, death, destruction and deprivation continues as before. The North-East Provincial Council, following its destabilization, has today degenerated into rule by administrative fiat from Colombo with the 13th Amendment to the Constitution virtually reduced to a non-entity.

I attribute the above developments mainly to the short-sightedness of the Sinhala political leadership and the nihilist character of the LTTE.

In your perception, how do you envisage a way out from this protracted conflict?

On the one hand, the Sinhala political leadership must liberate themselves from the mind-set that giving too much to the Tamil-speaking people is a stepping-stone to Eelam. They must realize that by following a policy of Sinhala-Buddhist exclusivism, they have only succeeded in excluding the Eelam Tamils from the process of nation-building in Sri Lanka. It is that exclusion which compelled the Tamil people to think in terms of separation.

If this is to be rectified, then it is important that the national communities be given the status as equal partners in shaping the collective destiny of all People's of Sri Lanka. This could only be done through fundamental constitutional reforms. Essentially, this involves mechanisms and guarantees, which are irreversible, that concedes substantial devolu-

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tion of powers to the merged North-East and an appropriate form of sharing of power at the centre.

On the other hand, the Tamil polity should be prepared to reach out directly to the Sinhala masses and assuage any fears that they may have as regards the legitimate aspirations of the Tamil-speaking people. It must be made clear that the satisfaction of the legitimate aspirations of the Tamil-speaking people would not in any way impinge on the legitimate aspirations of the Sinhalese people.

As regards the LTTE, given its claim that it is the 'sole' representative of the Tamil people while systematically undermining the interests of the people that they claim to 'solely' represent, and given its inherent fascist and nihilist character, any advice that I may offer it would be of little relevance. This is something that self-proclaimed intermediaries of the LTTE should also understand.

Could you outline the issues that later snowballed into the EPRLF declaring UDI?

I am glad you have asked me this question, since what transpired during the tenure of the North-East Provincial Government remains shrouded in mystery and intrigue in the public perception.

Firstly, what is commonly called the UDI was only a declaration of intent. A Resolution was passed in the North-East Provincial Council which declared that if the 19-Pt Charter (dealing primarily with devolution, law and order and a transitional government prior to the holding of fresh elections) earlier formulated by the EPRLF and unanimously adopted in the legislative council, was not implemented within a year, then the North-East Provincial Council would be compelled to sit as a constituent assembly to draft a Constitution for a free and sovereign State of Eelam.

While such a declaration is seen by many as unconstitutional, our motive was precisely to expose the extra-constitutional measures adopted by the Premadasa Government aimed at destabilizing the North-East Provincial Government. This was partly in response to conditions laid down by the LTTE during the so-called 'talks' between LTTE and Colombo and also partly due to the inability on the part of the Centre to come to grips with the reality that they had to deal with a Tamil Provincial Government with its seat of administration in Trincomalee.

This nexus between LTTE and Premadasa led to the rearming and the unleashing of LTTE-terror on the duly elected EPRLF-led Provincial Government. This adventurist policy pursued by Colombo was also in stark contradiction with the agreement reached between the Central Government and the Provincial Government, at the level of the Security Co-ordination Group, aimed at ensuring a smooth transition during and after the withdrawal of the IPKF.

In short, the duly elected North-East Provincial Council was functioning under a state of siege imposed on it by Colombo and the LTTE, as a part of the deal hatched by Premadasa and the LTTE. Our subsequent withdrawal, following the conditional UDI, should be seen in that context.

Your organization is termed 'Eelam People's Revolutionary Front' (EPRLF) and in the name of the organization itself you have the so-called 'Eelam Tag'. This has resulted in the Sinhala community placing both you and the LTTE in the same category. How would you differentiate the EPRLF from the LTTE?

I am somewhat taken-aback by this question pertaining to our name, since I am not aware that this is a burning issue amongst the broad Sinhala people – as the question seems to imply. However, let me take this opportunity to explain as to what the term 'Eelam' means to me and my Party.

'Eelam' symbolizes the collective identity of the Tamil-speaking people of Sri Lanka who constitute a distinct, though a minority nationality in Sri Lanka with the North-East comprising their traditional homeland. However, we do not believe that the demand for a separate and a sovereign state of Eelam automatically stems from that collective identity or as a birthright. It gains potence only when the Sri Lankan identity becomes exclusively Sinhala-Buddhist to the extent of denying the Eelam Tamils their own distinct identity and heritage.

The above is a concrete reality – irrespective of what the LTTE or the EPRLF view it. The crucial difference between the EPRLF and the LTTE, however, is that the EPRLF has been trying to shape events, particularly following the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord, where the Tamil National Question could be resolved and the Eelam identity preserved within a united, democratic and a secular Sri Lanka. The LTTE, on the other hand, has been trying to shape events where Eelam, as a separate nation-state becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, and their absolute hegemony over it permanent and unshakeable. The irony is that the conduct of the Sinhala political leadership, which stubbornly refuses to concede to the legitimate aspirations of the Eelam people to live as equals with the Sinhalese people within a united Sri Lanka, is only serving to strengthen the LTTE tendency, while marginalizing the more progressive and secular Tamil opinion represented by EPRLF.

Recently there have been reports of Colombo approaching Delhi for assistance against the LTTE? What exactly would your role and EPRLF's role be under these circumstances?

Yes, I have read such reports in the media, including reports that the IPKF would be back. Most of these reports, in my opinion are purely speculative and sensational. Although, I and EPRLF are of the opinion that the withdrawal of the IPKF was premature, I do not see any indications whatsoever of New Delhi sending Indian troops in the near future, even if Colombo were to request it.

In any event, the political role and tasks of EPRLF is not determined by these factors alone.

However, as regards India's involvement, what we expect is a clear distinction between an Indian response to the LTTE menace and an Indian response to the festering ethnic relations in Sri Lanka. As a matter of fact, this is what we expect of Colombo as well. Both, Colombo and Delhi, will be making mistakes if they confuse the two. The priority today is to evolve a broadly acceptable political package that satisfies the legitimate aspirations of the Tamil-speaking people. If such a package could be evolved and if LTTE were to reject it, then at that stage, the LTTE will stand isolated from the Tamil people and the military factor will be decisive leading to the annihilation of the LTTE – not otherwise.

What is your attitude to the North-East merger? Do you think it is reasonable to demand that the Eastern Province where the Sinhala and Muslim communities taken together outnumber the Tamil community be made an appendage of the Northern province which is predominantly inhabited by Tamils?

It must not be forgotten that one of the most contentious issues behind the ethnic conflict is the state-sponsored colonization of predominantly Tamil areas with Sinhalese settlers. This policy was carried out by successive governments with the objective of undermining the contiguity of the traditional habitat of the Tamil-speaking people and their collective identity.

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ETHNIC CONFLICT: 1983-1993

Problem Cannot be Solved by Force or Subterfuge

by R. Sampanthan, Secretary-General, Tamil United Liberation Front

Much has been said and written about the horrible happenings of July '83. If the actions of the rampaging mobs were unimaginably atrocious, the manner of its execution revealed that it was part of a diabolical plan. There was nothing to indicate that the Government or some influential section within it was at least covertly not part of the plan. The total paralysis of governmental machinery and the lack of even a semblance of remorse from those in authority rendered such conclusions irresistible.

– Ten years have gone by –

A decade is a short term in the history of a country, but events in a given decade can be so tumultuous, so ominous, yet so significant and far reaching, that if one has to learn from the lessons of the past decade, and endeavour to ensure that the future holds hope, a deep introspection by all concerned is the least that one can expect.

1983 to 1993, could be characterised as –

(i) A decade in which a fierce war has continued to rage in the North-Eastern part of the country, and an insurrection had rocked almost the rest of the country for some length of time.

(ii) A decade in which over a hundred thousand citizens of this country whether they be members of the armed forces, youth engaged in armed combat, or non-combatant civilians have been killed and many more maimed incapacitated or otherwise physically injured.

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The population of the Sinhalese, in the Eastern province, increased from 9.5% at the time of Independence to 25% at present. This was by no means the result of voluntary migrations, but a state policy wedded to the principle of Sinhala-Buddhist exclusivism. The demerger of the presently merged North-East will only serve to heighten the fears and insecurity of the Tamil-speaking people which will go counter to the on-going attempts at national reconciliation.

(iii) A decade in which public and private property worth billions has been devastated or destroyed. In the North-East scores of villages have been razed to the ground, many towns are in near ruins.

(iv) A decade in which over a million citizens of this country have been rendered destitute deprived of their homes, the bread winners of these families deprived of their vocations in life, the younger generation deprived of adequate educational opportunities, and have become refugees in this country or in several other parts of the world.

(v) A decade in which the reputation of the country has been severely tarnished in the field of human rights. Torture, cruelty, inhuman treatment, unjustified detention, disappearances, and the suppression of other freedoms have become an all too frequent phenomenon.

(vi) A decade in which the vast majority of people particularly in the North-East, who are yearning for peace and an honourable life have experienced human misery and suffering of an unprecedented magnitude. The fear of imminent death or injury and a deep sense of insecurity have so traumatised the young and the old, that its impact on society cannot but be harmful in the extreme.

Thousands of youth, boys and girls nurtured in an ethos of disciplined upbringing, cultural religious and family values, who for long had almost made an industry of education and with immense potential that could have been channeled towards the benefit of themselves, their families, society and the country, have reached such a state of despair that they are being sucked into the vortex of armed combat.

(vii) A decade in which hundreds of billions of rupees have been expended in the prosecution of war, purportedly in the pursuit of peace, an assertion which can acquire credibility only if the pursuit of peace by peaceful methods is characterised by a sense of seriousness and honesty.

(viii) A decade in which its many horrendous events had many lessons for the future, but tragically were not adequately learnt.

(ix) A decade of several missed opportunities.

The Government of Sri Lanka must inevitably stand largely indicted in respect of these depredations. Though other players in the political arena and in the area of military conflict are not free from blame a Government which has been in power for a considerable length of time cannot absolve itself from responsibility.

The view that seeming economic progress could be a panacea for all serious ills afflicting the country's body politic would seem misplaced.

The view that the rest of the country could be insulated from the tragic situation prevalent in some other part of this small country would also seem myopic. Many tragic events have proved the fallacy of such views.

An irrational disinclination to evolve an acceptable political solution, cannot be an excuse for the continuance of a War in which ultimately there can be no winner only losers all around, as indeed has been said before.

The view has been expressed that the fact that the vast majority of the victims of the War, whether they be combatants or civilians, hail from the underprivileged sections of society or alternatively the fact that the privileged sections have not been the real victims of the War, have made the powers that be, insensitive to the urgency of peace. The view has also been expressed that vested interests of varying hues being given precedence over the common good, has contributed to the continuance of the War. The series of missed opportunities only serve to buttress these views.

The events of the last decade cannot be viewed in isolation from certain landmark events of the previous decades.

The Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact did provide a framework in the 50s which could have been built upon. That was not to be. The Dudley Senanayake-Chelvanayakam Pact in the decade of the 60s was yet another effort in the same direction. That too was not to be. These pacts accepted and addressed fundamental concerns of an aggrieved people during a given period. The abrogation of these pacts and non-redressal of these concerns inevitably aggravated the situation and introduced into the whole equation new and even more complex dimensions.

If the broadest possible consensus should be the hall-mark of constitution making, the 1972 and 1978 constitu-

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tions were regrettably exercises in constitutional brow-beating. The erasure of the meagre safeguards enshrined in the 1948 constitution drafted by the departing British Colonialists, in the somewhat futile expectation that such safeguards would adequately compensate for the unification of administration, so as to give it a distinctly hegemonistic character and pre-empt legitimate claims for Autonomy, had only contributed to greater rigidity on either side and the renunciation of flexibility as a means of resolving conflicts. The stage was set for the intensification of the conflict. The 1981 District Development Council exercise was a feeble attempt to retrieve an almost hopeless situation. That elections could be held to these Councils in the North and East and that they could be constituted was yet another opportunity offered to the Government. The government itself has subsequently accepted responsibility for the collapse of these institutions. The victims of injustice were prepared to the very end to be the votaries of peace.

The Referendum of 1982 rejected in the North and East did not contribute to political stability in that region or for that matter in the rest of the country.

The pogrom of July 1983 was followed by the acceptance of the good offices of India. The All-Parties Conference of 1984 and the Thimpu talks of 1985 ended in a fiasco. Not merely did the Government fail to offer anything substantial, it even retracted from its earlier commitments. During a critical phase, valuable years were lost, and the country slipped further into the mire. Participants in Constitutional processes were being perforce driven into the back seat. Armed militancy was on the ascendancy.

1986 and 1987 witnessed the Government accepting pro-forma the concept of Provincial Councils. The Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement, the 13th Amendment to the Constitution and the Provisional Councils Act followed. The main Opposition party too, has come to accept the concept of Provincial Councils. The 13th Amendment to the Constitution and the Provincial Councils Act, were however, not the products of consensus between the contending parties particularly on contentious issues. The 13th Amendment to the Constitution and the Provincial Councils Act were not even the products of Consensus between the Governments of Sri Lanka and India. Commitments made by the Government of Sri Lanka to the Government of India, after the 13th Amendment to the Constitution and the Provincial Councils Act were tabled in Parliament, for further constitutional reform in respect of vital aspects of the scheme of autonomy remain unfulfilled.

The duly elected Chief-Minister of the most populous and prosperous province in the country, has deemed it proper to state that her position as the Chief Minister of the Province is comparable to that of a glorified head clerk. Her remark I am inclined to believe relates to matters of general and common concern. If her remark related to matters of special concern in a region such as the North-East comparison of the position of the Chief Minister to that of a glorified messenger would perhaps have been more apt.

If the 50s and 60s witnessed the abrogation of agreements in respect of matters of vital concern, followed in the 70s by efforts to preempt democratic redressal of these concerns, domestic and international pressure in the 80s has influenced the passage of legal provisions, which however, lack the basic element of efficacy. The legal provisions meant to offer solutions to some of these concerns, when translated into actual practice, do not offer a genuine opportunity for a redressal of these concerns.

The All Parties Conference and the Parliamentary Select Committee set up after the constitution of the present Parliament, one regrets, have made no constructive contribution to the resolution of the conflict.

The failure to evolve an acceptable solution, but the relentless pursuit of policies long resisted by an aggrieved people, and in recent times, increasingly, through deliberate programmes, in violation of the substance of earlier agreements and commitments, and in total disregard of current legal provisions purportedly intended to remedy these grievances, raises the question of whether the lack of political will to evolve an acceptable solution, is attributable to a determination to pursue such policies, under the smoke screen of political dialogue and attempts at compromise. In other words, is there an attempt to thwart in advance, the possible benefits of later political resolution by altering ground realities. This would be tragic, as such an attitude can sadly only lead to the intensification of the conflict, and immense harm to the whole country. One cannot but ask, whether the present situation, in which the country is being bled, in every sense, has to continue.

Aggrieved people reach a stage when they need a solution that will be effective and will endure. It has to be commensurate with the sacrifices they have made, and the sufferings they have borne over a period of more than four decades. The coming decade must surely not be a re-enactment of the one gone by. If drift, delay, and a lack of honest purpose are to be continuing features, the possible consequences could perhaps be only deeply sorrowful to all of us.

Just grievances can only be resolved by just means. They can never be and indeed have never been resolved by force or by subterfuge. The Tamil people need to be offered a just effective and enduring solution, not a specious one. They need to feel safe, to feel secure and have an effective say in the management of their affairs. To ask for as much as is necessary to live in safety, in peace and honour, is not to ask for too much. The people are sovereign and the Tamil people should have the opportunity of sharing this sovereignty. Ultimately, it is the Tamil people, and the Tamil people only who have a right to be final arbiters of their destiny. Given a genuine choice, I have not the slightest doubt that they will decide prudently and wisely.

It is up to the political leadership of this country to show courage and statesmanship and make such an offer to the Tamil people.

Lost Opportunities And Shattering Experience of Muslims

by Uvais Ahamed, former Principal, Zahira College, Colombo

The decade 1983 – 1993 has undoubtedly been the most traumatic of this century for all Sri Lankans irrespective of their race, religion, language and cultural backgrounds. It is important that a decade of such significance should not be allowed to pass without having a hard long look at the series of events that unfolded on the socio-political stage of this country and the impact they have had on every segment of Sri Lankan society. All categories of Sri Lankan society, whether they were the young generation still going through the processes of schooling, or the young men and women who have entered the Univer-

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sities and other tertiary institutions dreaming scenarios of their own preferred futures or the older folks with family and other responsibilities trying to make ends meet faced with a spiralling cost of living or the champions of commerce and industry efficiently harvesting the returns of an open economy or even the politicians, some of whom would have regretted, specially during the JVP days of 1989/90, their decision to enter the political arena inspite of all the perks and power it engendered, they have all seen and experienced the impact of the events that took place during this decade.

That this seminar is being held in the early part of August 1993 is in my opinion of special significance because it tacitly informs us that the decade under discussion is in fact from July 1983 to July 1993. Due to the scheming machinations of a few chauvinistic individuals the entire Colombo and other urban areas in this blessed country were set ablaze ten years ago turning it into killing fields where innocent men, women and children from the Tamil community were mercilessly killed and properties plundered and destroyed. The period between this month of shame and the Janakapura disaster two weeks ago has seen the snuffing out of innocent Sri Lankan lives, lives belonging to all communities in this country. We have now come to a stage when it is imperative that we face realities and search our collective conscience as to why this destructive tendency has been allowed to continue for ten long years transplanting a gun and bomb culture into the placid and peaceful life styles which all communities of this country had been accustomed to.

Young children between the age of 5 and 15 who were attending school at the time this decade began have since grown into adolescence and adulthood with vivid memories of July 1983 and all that followed during the next ten years. This would have not only resulted in various conflicts and contradictions in their minds but also one could easily surmise that the value systems they had imbibed from their peers, parents and religious leaders too would have received a severe beating. I am sure every parent whether Sinhala, Tamil or Muslim would have been concerned about the impact the gory images of this decade would have had on the impressionable minds of their charges.

An important question that has to be asked is what action have the elders in society, who themselves had been traumatized by these events, taken to help the younger people to get over the bitter memories of the July riot, JVP and other killings and the massacres of Muslims in the villages and Mosques. It is important that this question be addressed in all earnestness because it is incumbent on the elders, whether they are parents, teachers, religious leaders or politicians who in one way or the other should take responsibility for the events of this decade, to take meaningful steps to ensure that the younger generation sheds whatever negative attitudes they may have developed and grow up with the right frame of mind to live with a spirit of good will and understanding in an essentially multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual country. This is a challenge to the elders and leaders of all communities if we are serious about our assertions that our only salvation from this anarchic situation is to think and act in terms of a Sri Lankan identity and Sri Lankan society.

The unfortunate trend in Sri Lanka ever since we received independence from the British has been one of compartmentalization. The people of this country who had been mixing freely with each other irrespective of the community to which they belonged and who were able to close ranks to wage a struggle against the British to win freedom began to withdraw into their private enclaves of communal living fully cloistered from other influences and interactions, and began to develop with parochial and not national interests uppermost in their minds. The country saw a proliferation of Muslim Associations, Christian Associations, Hindu Associations and Buddhist Associations. I am not in any way decrying the importance of these organizations which have done yeomen service to their respective religio-cultural entities, but what is lamentable is that not many people have taken the initiative to develop organizations which could forge linkages between various ethnic and cultural groups in the country. It is the absence of such linkages that had made the different communities easy prey when contentious issues come to the fore and they become easily manipulated by unscrupulous, self-seeking individuals and parties.

It is indeed a sad commentary of our times that generally a man from the North is unable to communicate with the man from the South in any of the two national languages. Is it not sad that we have to talk in this vein 45 years after attaining independence from the British. We have seen in some of our teledramas when a Muslim man's role is played by a Sinhala person, he is made to mispronounce the Sinhala words like the way my grandfather or great grandfather would have spoken that language during their times, and this is done presumably to provoke humour and laughter among the audience and sadly enough at a time when there are many Muslims who could speak and perform better in Sinhala than the Sinhalese themselves. Very often Muslims are portrayed in teledramas as unscrupulous traders or as gem merchants prone to cheat others. Considering the fact that the period we are discussing will be remembered as the decade in which television has got deeply entrenched in the national ethos of this country, is it not a great pity that the national media should give its blessings to such activities which are extremely inimical to national interest and would in no way help to bring about national integration.

While it has to be conceded that all three communities in this country have had their share of the privations and suffering of this decade, there is no doubt whatsoever that this period will go down in history as the worst the Muslims have experienced ever since they settled down here several centuries ago dating back to pre-Islamic days when evidence of the presence of Arabs has been established with the excavation of Arabic coins in ancient cities like Anuradhapura.

There had been a Ceylon Moor settlement in the heart of Jaffna which had seen several generations growing up in harmony with the Tamils. This harmony and understanding had been so pronounced that at one time a Muslim was elected the Mayor of Jaffna. The Jaffna Muslim Community had been able to produce the first Muslim civil servant in the country and also the first Muslim graduate who went on to become the first Muslim lawyer. Today there is hardly any trace of Muslim existence in Jaffna. Every one of them had been driven away from the land of their birth and are now scattered around Sri Lanka as refugees. They are now making a valiant effort to build anew their broken lives and looking forward to the day when they can go back to the land in which they and their ancestors were born. Their plight is as bad as that of the Palestinian refugees, but there is hardly any concern international or national expended on them. Muslims who had been living in Mannar for several centuries were given only a few hours notice to leave their homes sans any of their belongings. They are now languishing in refugee

camps all over the country. It is said that gold ornaments were grabbed from them at gun point and taken away in gunny bags. They had to enter refugee camps penniless and are now living a miserable life depending on the charity of a few kind individuals. Several Muslim villages in the Eastern province and the Polonnaruwa district have been attacked by the marauding Tigers and hundreds of innocent men, women and children have been mercilessly massacred. Those who escaped are living as destitutes. The most shattering experience the Muslims had to undergo during this decade was when two Mosques in the populous Kathankudi village were desecrated by the Tigers. More than 100 innocent God fearing Muslims who were deep in prayers in the Mosques were mauled down by these heartless creatures in human form turning the House of God into a mass graveyard. What more could you expect a community to suffer apparently for no rhyme or reason except perhaps the political bungling of those who call themselves leaders.

During the last ten years numerous meetings have been held among political parties and NGOs. Independent individuals have taken the initiative to talk to the parties involved in the conflict. The Government has had talks with the LTTE both in Sri Lanka and elsewhere. A Select Committee had been functioning to help resolve the conflict, and religious dignitaries from the South have had talks with the LTTE in the North. But still as evidenced by the Janakapura disaster of a few weeks ago and the Bambalapitiya Kovil bomb blast only last week, the culture of violence that had gripped our nation ten years ago still seems to be the order of the day. Inspite of all the pious pronouncements of politicians and others declaring their intention of conflict resolution, there does not seem to be any light at the end of the tunnel and innocent lives are continuing to be lost.

Whatever the antecedents of the conflict may be, Sri Lankans as a whole will for a long time repent the missed opportunity five years earlier. In 1977 thanks to economic debacle and mismanagament of the previous regime, the UNP was elected to Parliament with a ⅔rd majority, a position that could have strengthened the elbow of any regime to fearlessly address the disillusionment of the Tamil youth and resolve the continuing conflict, if only they had the political will to do so. While the disaffection and frustration of the Tamils especially that of the youth of that community were simmering beneath the surface with all signs of blowing up at anytime, the regime that came to power, without using this marvellous opportunity to marshal all their resources and resolve the conflict once and for all, began to preoccupy themselves with two other issues which were of no immediate significance. These were the actions taken (a) to deprive Mrs. Bandaranaike of her civic rights and (b) to change the existing constitution using the ⅔rd majority to set up an Executive Presidential form of government giving the President almighty powers. It has of course to be said to the credit of that regime that they set in motion a vast economic recovery programme which gained momentum in 1988 and is going on unabated even to this day. But unfortunately they were not sensitive or sensible enough to understand that for any form of development to take place there should be first and foremost peace and harmony in the country. Perhaps they thought the Tamil question would in the fullness of time get diluted or resolve itself, along with the acceleration of economic development. When the entire economic machinery got stalled as a result of the aftermath of the July 1983 riots, aided by the relentless propaganda of the Tigers which was of no match to that of the Government, the realization had come a little too late. The lost opportunity of 1977 and the miscalculations that followed had resulted in the most agonising decade of 1983 to 1993.

The lives that have been lost on both sides of this senseless war and the colossal amounts of money that has been spent by the Government to keep their war machines in operation represent useful human resources on the one hand and scarce material resources on the other. It is indeed tragic both to Sri Lanka and its citizens that it has not been possible to come to terms with the basic issues involved in the conflict and bring about a lasting solution so that all resources could be channeled to make our dear land a better place to live in for us and the generations to come.

(Courtesy: *Lanka Guardian*).

TAMIL NADU NEWSLETTER

by T.N. Gopalan, Madras

● Repatriation of Sri Lankan Refugees

The Jayalalitha government seems to be patting itself on its back – at last it has succeeded in arm-twisting a weak Centre into agreeing to the second phase of the repatriation of thousands of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees even though the Lankan armed forces and the LTTE are still locked up in fierce clashes in various parts of the North-East.

Ever since the Rajiv assassination in 1991, Ms. Jayalalitha has been persistently calling for the deportation of all Lankan Tamils from the soil of Tamil Nadu. In the first flush, when the Cong-I and the AIADMK had a perfectly amicable relationship, the Rao government gladly agreed to the idea of repatriation, and the process got going in January last year. Mainly the families of Lankan government officials – who were fed up with the changed situation in this country and hoped normalcy had been restored in the 'cleared areas' of the North-East – volunteered to go back.

But soon in their zeal to get 'efficiency certificate' from the government, the camp administrations in various parts of the state started coercing, browbeating and bulldozing many unwilling refugees into 'volunteering' for repatriation. Inevitably protests arose and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees intervened. The repatriation process was suspended in October. Thereafter the government of India and the UNHCR entered into an agreement on the issue. But meantime the relationship between the alliance partners soured up, and the Centre was not all that keen on humouring the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister. But the latter would not give up and even succeeded in roping in the UNHCR on her side. Finally 1129 refugees left the Indian shores in M.V. Nicobar on August 12 to an uncertain future.

There were virtually no protests from anyone, barring a solitary instance, on the blatant injustice and inhumanity involved in the action.

The Indo-Sri Lanka Friendship Society, with the redoubtable Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer as its patron and which has undertaken many peace initiatives in the past, organised a one-day token fast in Madras protesting the deportation on the very first day of the commencement of the second phase of repatriation. Leaders of the DMK, CPI, PMK, CPI(M-L) and a number of other human rights organisations addressed the demonstrators and denounced the state government.

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The CPM even passed a resolution at its state-level conference pleading for a humane treatment of the refugees and an end to their harassment.

The Madras office of the UNHCR, with its absurdly low staff strength of three to four – to monitor the repatriation process, that is, – was allowed some access to the refugees at a transit point near Madras. By that time the volunteers, most of whom had gone through several bouts of humiliation at the hands of the camp authorities, had made up their minds to risk a return to the island rather than put up with the sufferings in the camps. So then the UNHCR was convinced of the 'voluntariness' of the entire process.

But then there were also a number of refugees who had been bundled into lorries and buses and taken to Madras despite strong protests. According to the Organisation for the Protection of the Tamils of Eelam from Genocide and Other Violations of Human Rights (PROTEG) refugees in five different camps, at the very least, had been coerced by high-handed officials. The inmates had been threatened with dire consequences if they did not play ball. Among the threats held out were – stoppage of doles and rations after September 9, closure of camps, denial of education and medical faciltiies, no permission for them to go out to work and even detention in special camps.

The UNHCR started sitting back and taking notice. In quite a few cases the Madras office put its foot down and refused to allow the unwilling refugees to be thrown out.

Ironically the Jayalalitha government has only helped put the Lankan Tamil issue back on the agenda of the Tamil Nadu political parties by its clumsy handling of the refugee issue. Those forces which had all preferred to take a low profile thanks to odium brought about by the Rajiv assassination are now making bold to speak up on the refugee issue, to start with that is.

Efforts are on to get a joint statement of senior opposition leaders demanding an immediate halt to repatriation. DMK President, M. Karunanidhdi is very exercised about the matter, it transpired during a chat this correspondent had with him last week, and could come out with a strong statement sooner rather than later.

For the records in the current phase the state government is planning to send back around 4,000 refugees, most of them belonging to the Mannar mainland. But already the camp authorities are scraping the bottom of the barrel and there is not likely to be any more volunteers whatever the bullying and intimidation held out.

Assuming the officials manage to achieve their target of 4,000. that should leave around 79,000 refugees in the camps and an equal number, even more, outside. So then Sri Lanka is bound to engage the minds of the Tamil society in this country for a long long time to come.

● Bomb Blast in RSS Office

A powerful blast on a quiet afternoon on August 8 ripped through the two-storeyed headquarters of the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) in the heart of the city. Altogether 11 persons, including two women, perished and five others were seriously injured.

Incidentally none of the killed or injured, who were all rescued from under the debris, had been pierced by a bomb splinter.

To this day the actual nature of explosion, the bomb used as also the identity of the culprits remains a matter of intense controversy. Also the blast has kicked off yet another bout of bitter exchanges between the Centre and the state government apart from making the communal situation rather tense.

The blast sent shock waves all over. Coming as it did in the wake of more catastrophic explosions in Bombay and Calcutta, people began to wonder whether it was all a part of the grand destabilisation efforts initiated by some inimical regimes. Since the RSS is a blatantly communal outfit, unabashedly working for Hindu revivalism, the suspicion inevitably zeroed in on Muslim fundamentalist groups.

To make matters worse, only a week before the blast, Palani Baba, heading Al Jihad, a one-man organisation but who makes frequent appearances on the PMK platform, had called for the demoliton of the RSS offices and the like as a fitting revenge for the Babri Masjid outrage of December last.

Yet again the blast had occurred on the very day of the annual Guru pooja in which most of the state leaders take part. Fortunately the function venue had been shifted to some other auditorium and the functionaries reached the state headquarters well after the explosion.

It was time for a lot of self-righteous indignation and breast-beating by the Hindu communalists and also for the anti-AIADMK parties to berate the government for the security lapses.

Chief Minister Jayalalitha had to face some embarrassing moments since she had left Madras more than an hour after the blast for election campaign in Dindigul in southern Tamil Nadu. She visited the site only the next day and claimed that at the time of her departure, she had had no idea of the tragedy. She had only been told of some blast and a 'house collapse'. Her adversaries made the best use of this 'communication gap', pointing out that far away in New Delhi the union ministers had come to know of the blast within an hour.

There was more politics to come with Ms. Jayalalitha demanding a CBI probe and the Centre saying that the state police was quite competent to handle the issue. One began to doubt whether both the governments were fighting shy of the issue for some extraneous reasons – like they would not like to own responsibility for probe results which could prove politically very hot.

The first shot was fired when Cong-I Legislature party leader S.R. Balasubramanian wondered whether the explosion was an inside job, meaning explosives stored by the RSS itself had gone off accidentally. After all the Vinayaka Chathurthi procession was to follow in a month's time.

Further there was no crater. The intensity of the explosion, the extent of damages did not make point to the use of the dreaded RDX, an imported stuff. besides since it was the first floor portion which had caved in, the chances were that the bomb(s) had been secreted in a first floor room – with the RSS office generally guarded as a fortress by the **swayamsevaks** (RSS cadres) and hence there was little access for outsiders, even senior intelligence personnel started speculating on the 'inside job' line.

However, subsequently the state police personnel told the press that RDX (Research and Development explosive) and PTN (Penta Erythritol Tetra Nitrate) known as a plastic bomb) had both been used, probably in a 'mixed state', the PTN acting as a booster to the main charge. The finding was arrived at after an analysis of the debris, victim's clothing, furniture, electrical fittings and so on.

There was no crater found possibly because the explosives had been kept on a stool, the experts felt.

Further two strangers were said to have visited the RSS office twice shortly before the blast on August 5 and

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READERS FORUM

ISRAELI-PLO DEAL OFFERS FORMULA FOR SOLUTION OF SINHALA-TAMIL CONFLICT

God alone knows the desperate need of the Tamils for a fair and honourable peace settlement, after nearly 3 decades of discrimination, added to a decade or more of unbearable violence, deprivation, devastation and atrocities. Eelam War II began at the the tail end with open war on all sides, together with a cruel blockade and aerial shelling to torment the suffering Tamils still further. Despite the horror and the suffering, it inured the Tamils to hardship past all imagination, and a stoicism, which could well endure for further decades. Such sustained militancy despite vast inflicting forces, is perhaps similar to the Intifada spirit which has sustained Palestinian resistance. Despite the hideous reprisals, against stone-throwing teenagers, the spirit of resistance has not been cowed, until at last, the Israelis have been worn out with a never ending scenario of danger and hostility.

On the other hand, the heedless bravado with which the Sinhalese mobs let loose the holocaust of 1983, has given place to anxiety and thought as to the terrible cost in men, materials and cost, apart from the spiritual degradation resulting from bestial violence. With over a decade of war behind, the prospect of an unending war has now to be reckoned with by the government. C.V. Wedgewood's appraisal of the 30 year war in Europe, centuries back would be apt in the present context of the Eelam wars now being waged, heedless of civilian suffering: 'The war solved no problems. Its effects both immediate and indirect, were either negative or disastrous. Morally subversive, economically destructive, socially degrading, confused in causes, devious in its course, futile in result'. It is indeed time the government considered the folly of it all.

Hence the urgency to consider and formulate possible solutions which could be implemented without the political complexities of referendums, amendments to the constitution that have thwarted every solution. Interim solutions could bypass the need for fixed positions and legal stands. No national problem can be solved if constitutional forms needing heavy majorities, are subject to the opposing wills of populist politicians and mass emotions. Proper governing is often hindered by democracy subject to mass emotions. This has been the bane of democracy.

It is in this context, that solutions now being formulated to solve the Palestinian problem might usefully be considered. The background of this conflict has much in common with the Tamil problem. Israel with its mighty armoured competence, so brilliantly effective in the 6-day war, and its vast military hardware, has at last seen the futility of reprisal and brutality to cow the Palestinians and has now formulated a solution still to be ratified, apparently on the following basics: (1) Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza strip and Jerico. (2) A Palestinian pledge not to declare an independent or sovereign state. (3) P.L.O. participation in the vacated areas, as Israel withdraws. (4) Selection of a Palestinian Government to administer the West Bank and the Gaza strip. Residents of East Jerusalem would be able to vote and run for office in the election. (5) Israeli settlements in the West Bank, would be under Israeli jurisdiction for an interim period; eventually Israeli settlers would be given the option of remaining in their communitiies under the Palestinian Government or being repatriated. (6) Negotiations on a 'final status' of all territories would begin in two years, and not three as originally envisioned – likely to be the most difficult issue of the talks – will be postponed until then.

If the names P.L.O. and Palestinians be replaced with LTTE and Tamils, and the names West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Israel by North and East and Sinhalese, the above scenario could be equated to suit a solution to the Tamil problems, generally based around the concepts outlined above.

Such a solution could probably be manipulated without much opposition, since it would be primarily an interim solution without the permanence of constitutional edicts. It would give time for both parties to try out the solution, honestly and in good faith to justify trust on both sides. Though interim unpromulgated concepts and proposals would be contrary to LTTE requirements, yet the right to retain its defensive equipment, could add up to a position better than the state of fluidity and war which has precluded practical solutions, however pragmatic. Such an interim solution would leave out the squabbling and arguments on the varied constitutional concepts practiced in other countries, such as federalism, the Indian States system, Cantons, etc., etc. What is important is that the spirit of a fair and honest deal with the Tamils, respecting their present claims be honoured, without attempts to sabotage or pervert through stooges and administrative complexities. Once the heat of battle and passions of hate and rancour are quietened, wiser counsels could prevail, and a spirit of give and take on the basis of trust and honest dealing.

An interim workout would put both parties on trial as to intentions and the spirit of compromise. What is urgent is to break the stalemate which serves the chauvinists and political opportunists. The above mentioned Israeli-Palestinian proposals are still in the secret discussion stage, but provide directions for adaptaton to suit local conditions.

T. Balasingham.

Continued from page 25

again a few hours before the explosion. Based on the description provided by the RSS witnesses, the police released to the press two pictures of the suspects drawn on a computer by the National Crime Records Bureau personnel.

Ms. Jayalalitha, never found wanting when it comes to playing on Hindu sentiments, promptly announced a reward of RS. 2 lakhs for those providing information on the suspects and also offered to foot the bill for the reconstruction of the RSS building.

Still doubts persist. Whether it is an elaborate put on staged by the state government to bale out an embarrassed RSS, we cannot say for sure. One will have to wait for some more time for firmer evidence to decide on possible 'outside links'.

Meantime after a lot of bullying and bravado, the Chief Election Commissioner, T.N. Selshan has agreed to hold Palani Lok Sabha and Ranipet Assembly by-elections in the third week of September. The results will help assess the current electoral mood. The Centre which is unable to make up its mind on the dismissal of the Jayalalitha regime and on the options before it after the dismissal is likely to decide one way or the other after the two by-elections.

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MATRIMONIAL

Jaffna Hindu *seeks professionally qualified groom for her graduate sister, 32, Mars afflicted, in employment in London. Telephone 081-504 1363.*

Parent *seeks bridegroom between 35 and 40, doctor, engineer or accountant for doctor daughter. M 679 c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Hindu parents *seek educated, fair, homely bride with good personality for their son, 26, British citizen, vegetarian, good personality, professionally qualified and employed. M 680 c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Hindu *seeks professionally qualified groom for 32-year-old attractive, accountant daughter. Horoscope immaterial. Box 8714, Northridge, California, USA.*

Uncle *seeks bride for nephew, 30, American Bank employee earning over £25,000 annually. Telephone 081-441 2791 or write to M 681 c/o Tamil Times.*

Uncle *seeks for niece, British citizen, 24, ACCA finalist, groom in similar position. Telephone 081-441 2791 or write to M 682 c/o Tamil Times.*

WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couples on their recent wedding.

Harindra *son of the late Dr. A. Rajiyah and Mrs. Pushpa Rajiyah of 45 Rosmead Place, Colombo 7 and* **Sahana** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. A. Kathirmalainathan of 209 Sloane Avenue, North York, Ontario M4A 2C5, Canada on 27.8.93 at Leaside Memorial Community Gardens, 1073 Millwood Road, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.*

Rajanbabu *son of Mr. & Mrs. R. Sivanithy of 181 Torbay Road, Harrow, Middx., HA2 2QF and* **Suhanya** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. N. Skanthan of 39 Ravensbourne Park, Catford, London SE6 4XY on 5.9.93 at The Civic Suite, Wandsworth Town Hall, London SW18.*

Registration of Marriage

The marriage has been registered of **Dr. Iyngaran** *son of the late Dr. & Mrs. C.M. Vaniasegeram of Mallakam, Sri Lanka and* **Sivakami** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. S. Ponniah of Thirunelvely, Sri Lanka at the Marriage Registry, Camden, London NW1 2RX on 14.9.93.*

OBITUARIES

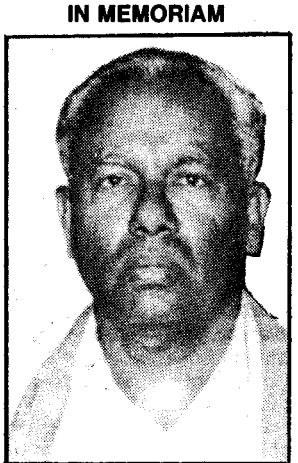
Miss Thanaluxmi **Thambiappah** *(61), Retired Teacher, Kokuvil Hindu College and Wootton School, Kotagala, Sri Lanka; beloved daughter of the late Thambiappah and Mrs. Thambiappah of Kandermadam, Sri Lanka; sister of Maheswari (Hatton), late Ratnam (Editor, Dinapathy, Colombo), Balasingham (Hatton), Vijeyakumaar (Hobart Sheraton, Australia), Krishnakumar (Royal Oman Police), Sarathadevi (St. Anthony's, Colombo), Shanthakumaar (Ocean Accounting Tax Consultants, Scarborough, Canada); sister-in-law of the late Elangarajah, Maheswari, Pathmadevi, Manohari, Selvaranjitham, Sivarajah (Rusail Catering Oman) and Jayadaya; with several nieces and nephews passed away on 24.4.93 at 'Siva Bhavanam', Kokuvil West, Sri Lanka - V.T. Vijeyakumaar, Tel: (6102) 354511; V.T. Krishnakumar, Oman; T. Shanthakumaar Tel: (416) 754 2182.*

Mrs. Nallamma Arumugam *of Veemankamam, Tellippalai, Sri Lanka – Relict of S. Arumugam, Teacher, Mahajana College; beloved mother of Vimalachandra (California) and Mahendran (Washington); mother-in-law of Gnanambikai and Balagowri; loved grandmother of Bahirathan, Sanjeevan, Dushyanthi, Gadjen and Mayoorathan passed away in Seattle on August 23, 1993. The funeral took place on August 25, 1993. Relatives and friends please accept this intimation – 23206, 82nd Place West, Edmonds, Washington 98026, USA.*

P. Sabaratnam, *Attorney-at-law, Retired Legal Advisor, Times of Ceylon, dearly beloved husband of Rasammah; father of Mangayarkarasi (Pt. Pedro), Punithavathy (Vavuniya), Sivapathaviruthayar (Jaffna), Sundaramoorthy (Melbourne, Australia), Arunanthy (Sydney) and Dr. Sivaneswary (General Hospital, Colombo); father-in-law of Nadarajah (Hartley College), Sivakolunthu (Vavuniya), Maheswary (Jaffna), Ranjini (Melbourne), Dr. Shalini (Sydney) and Easwaran Selliah (Colombo) passed away peacefully on 9.9.93 aged 89 years. Funeral took place in Jaffna, Thamil Eelam on the same day.*

Mrs. Yogeswary Wallooppillai, *beloved wife of Dr. N.J. Wallooppillai, loving mother of Mala; daughter of the late Mr. & Mrs. V.A. Kandiah, sister of Gnaneswari, Yogendran & Mangayakarasi (Arasi) Mahadevan passed away peacefully on 3.9.93 and was cremated at Kanatte, Colombo. – Mrs. Arasi Mahadevan, 67 Chesterfield Road, Epsom, Surrey KT19 9QR. Tel: 081-393 3882; Dr. N.J. Wallooppillai, 20/1 Pedris Road, Colombo 3. Tel: 573857.*

IN MEMORIAM



In loving memory of **Dr. Saravanamuttu Paramanathan** *on the second anniversary of his passing away on 26th of September 1991. Greatly missed and fondly remembered with love and affection by his wife Vallambihai, his children Lohini, Mohini, Wickneswaran; his sons-in-law Ganesharatnam and Ratnasabapathy (Napo); daughter-in-law Bernada; his grand children Kumaran, Vanathy, Haran and Dhakshila – 30 The Ridgeway, Kenton, Harrow, Middx., HA3 0LL.*

In loving memory of **Mr. Chelliah Kanthasamy,** *Telecommunication Engineer of Kaddudai, Manipay, who passed away on 11.9.88.*

Life is not measured by the years;
But the happiness and love you gave;
A smiling face and a heart of gold;
These are precious memories for us to hold.
No words can truly comfort us;
When the one we love departs;
Days of sadness still loom over us;
But memory of you, will live for ever.
Sadly missed and forever in the hearts of his wife and children – 58 Magowar Road, Girraweena, NSW 2145, Australia.

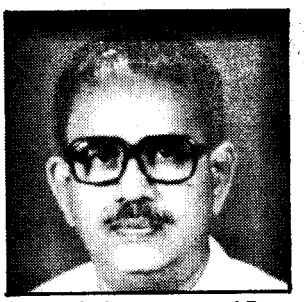
Mrs. Josephine Gunapushanam Varnan *(nee Manikkavasagar), Retired CEO (English), Jaffna departed on 21.9.92.*

Rest eternal grant unto her, O Lord, and
Let perpetual light shine upon her.

From her everloving husband Alex and loved ones in Ceylon, England and USA.

In ever loving memory of **Vathsaladevi** *on the third anniversaryy of her passing away on 9.9.90.*

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by her grieving parents Mr. & Mrs. Ponnudurai, brothers and sisters Mrs. Nageswary Thirunavukkarasu, Kalyanasundram, Mrs. Kamaladevi Tharmalingam, Mrs. Vimaladevi Vijayakumar, Nirmaladevi, Vimalendran, Balendran, Yogendran, Raveendran and Puvanendran – 37 Burnham Road, Dartford, Kent DA1 1AY. Tel: 0322 280685.



In ever-loving memory of **Deva Rajan N.,** *F.S.I., Licensed Surveyor, Leveller & Valuer of 257 Arasady Road, Kantharmadam, Yarlpanam. Fondly remembered on the second anniversary of his passing away on 11.9.91 by his beloved wife Padma, children Sujithan, Siva Kumaran, Rajam, Jeyaraman, Rengan, Raj Iswari; sons-in-law Theventhiran, Nirthanakumaran; daughters-in-law Jeyadevi, Suhanya, Thangalogini, Helen; grand children Jamuna, Karthika, Bharathan, Uththami, Luxmanan, Sri Ram, Vaitharani, Vithuran, Devarajan and Poorani; sister Saraswathy Panchacharam; brother Punjaksharam; sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law, relatives and friends. – Flat 4, 24 Mansfield Road, Ilford, Essex IG1 3AZ.*

A Rare Find

August 24, 1944... That was the day I met **Devarajan,** *'Deva' to his friends, for the first time. It is 49 years now; a long period of enduring friendship with him and his family. He was a friend who never got on your way unless you are on the way down; a precious being, simple, humble and gentle. Generous to a fault, he always stretched his hand to aid anyone. He was well-read; well-groomed; an exempler; his one distinct quality was never to use 'two words' when 'one' would suffice.*

A principled fighter, he would not hesitate to step in and stand firm closing his ears, come what may, against a howling mob. His words and deeds were wise and correct and I remember one of his many quotations to this very day, 'Never buy a house; buy a neighbour'. At times he used to tell me that a certain amount of opposition helps, quoting again that 'a kite rises against the wind and not with the wind'; he did much comforting and consoling; he belonged to only one race and that was the human race; he was a mixture of all religions.

He was a loving father; a dutiful husband. The most important thing a father could do for his children is to love their mother; Deva did just that. The result: he has children who are his living images.

He served the Survey Department for 20 years and made a name as a model surveyor. Once while serving in Colombo, under cross examination in a land dispute by the eminent civil lawyer Mr. E.B. Wickremanayake, Q.C., Deva had to elucidate with legal clarity in the District Court of Colombo the distinction between 'a Colombo City Survey Plan' and 'a landmarked Revenue Plan'. The Judge agreed with Deva's contention that a town survey Plan is not valid in a civil dispute in a court of law. Again when the Millers Building was acquired by the State, differences of opinion arose on the method to be adopted to survey the building. It was Deva's method that the Survey-General accepted. These were two instances of the many feathers to his cap!

Deva proved to be an honourable member of an honourable profession. Besides being a Land Surveyor, he was a Visiting Instructor in Surveying and Levelling at the Jaffna Poly Technical College and was recognised by his students as an able teacher. Two leading advocates of Jaffna considered Deva a consultant civil lawyer as well in land disputes.

Deva was a flowering branch of The Namasivayam's of 'Agilesar Clan' that has its roots at Neervely and Navatkuli respectively.

I thank God that 'SUCH A MAN AS HE EVER LIVED AND BEFRIENDED ME TO THE VERY END'.

M.F. Navaratnam.

Ilavalai.

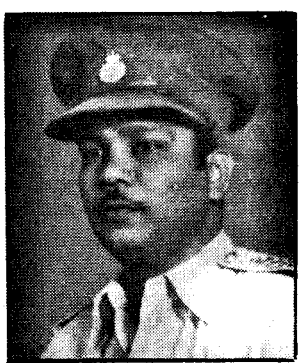
In fond memory of **Mr M.A. Rasiah** *(former Head master, Ilavalai, Ceylon and teacher at Herts. Tamil School, Watford, UK) on the first anniversary of his passing away on 18th September 1992.*

You will always be missed and affectionately remembered by your beloved wife, loved ones, relatives and friends for the fine blend of natures you possessed of being a strict disciplinarian but kind, sportive, religious, highly entertaining and above all your friendliness towards everyone without bounds.

A requiem mass in remembrance and for blessings will be held in the 'Our Lady and St. Michael's Church', Garston, Watford on 25th Sept. '93 at 9.30am.

May God Bless You. Sathianathan (Watford), Packiarajah (Colombo), Stella Devendra (Dubai), Shankar (New Malden), Theresa Nagarajah (Mathagal), Logan (Watford), Emilda Ranjini (Canada).

Viswalingam Shanugavadivel, Rtd.
SPHI of Valvettiturai
Born: 31.07.1922
Departed: 28.09.1990



Sadly missed and fondly remembered on the 3rd anniversary of his passing away by his loving wife Ratnaganthi; children Amirtakala (Madras), Ratnakumar (V.V.T.), Premkumar, Uthayakumar (both of Germany); Sivakumar, Sugirthakala (both of UK); sons-in-law Subashchandrabose (Canada), Ponnambalam (Switzerland) and Gobiratnam (UK); daughters-in-law Chandraleka (V.V.T.), Atputhamalar (Madras), Yogamathi, Yogasarojini (both of Germany); grandchildren Kavitha Janitha, Jawagar, Sitharth, Aravinth, Anusha, Kousigan, Shobana, Pradipa, Thushyanthini, Priyanthini, Shanmugapriyan, Satheesan, Prashanthan, Nivedita and Mahison. – 9 Portland House, High Trees, London SW2 3PD.

IN EVER LOVING MEMORY OF OUR BELOVED DAD

T.J. Rajaratnam

(Retired High Court Judge)

Called to Rest 15.9.1981

Forget you Dad we never will
For in our hearts we love you still
Silent thoughts bring many tears
For the one we loved and miss so dear.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by your wife Arul, children Rohini, Renuka, Rajiv; sons-in-law Vijayan, Sriharan; grandchildren Vasi, Ravi, Prathi, Jayanthy and Ajit.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

October 1 *Feast of St. Theresaa of the Child Jesus.*

Oct. 2 *Puradasi third Sani; Feast of Guardian Angels; 7.00pm.* **Jaffna College Alumni Association Dinner, Dance, Variety entertainment and A.G.M.** *at Lola Jones Hall, Tooting Leisure Centre, Greaves Place off Garratt Lane, London SW17. Tel: 081-942 6643/599 8162/361 3931.*

Oct. 2 *7.00pm London Murugan Temple presents* **Rukmani Kalyanam – A Dance Drama –** *by* **Kamini Kalidas** *at Logan Hall, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1 0AL. Tel: 081-478 8433/ 204 2470/904 9799.*

Oct. 3 *5.30pm Kalabhavanam presents* **Bharatha Natya Recital** *by* **Anuradha Jagannathan** *at South Norwood Centre, Croydon; 6.00pm* **Smt. Rudrani Balakrishnan** *presents her students in Musical Ensemble of* **Violin, Veena & Flute Recitals** *at London Murugan Temple Kalyana Mandapam at 78 Church Road, London E12. Tickets £2. Children free.*

Oct. 4 *Feast of St. Francis.*

Oct. 5 *7.30pm Shobana Jeyasingh presents 'Romance. . .in footnotes' in Bharatha Natyam at Nottingham Playhouse. Tel: 0602 419419.*

Oct. 7. *7.30pm Shobana Jeyasingh presents 'Romance. . .in footnotes' in Bharatha Natyam at Darlington Arts Centre. Tel: 0325 483168.*

Oct. 8 *7.30pm Shobana Jeyasingh presents 'Romance. . .in footnotes' in Bharatha Natyam at Newcastle Playhouse. Tel: 091-232 7079.*

Oct. 9 *Puraddasi fourth Sani. 7.00pm* **Jaffna Central College OSA & Vembadi Old Girls' Association** *joint* **Social, Dinner & Dance** *at Lola Jones Hall, Greaves Place off Garratt Lane, London SW17. Tel: 081-742 1139/647 9069/349 1172.*

Oct. 11 *Eekathasi.*

Oct. 12 & 13 *Shobana Jeyasingh presents 'Romance. . .in footnotes in Bharatha Natyam at Laban Centre, London SE14. Tel: 081-692 4070.*

Oct. 13 *Pirathosam.*

Oct. 14 *6.00pm Lecture & Discussion on 'Sri Lanka : How it evolved through the ages' at School of Oriental & African Studies. Tel: 071-278 3990 (S. Wijesinghe).*

Oct. 15 *Amavasai.*

Oct. 16 *Puradasi fifth Sani. Navarathiri starts.*

Oct. 16 & 17 *3.00pm* **Bharatha Natyam Dances** *at Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High St., London W8 6NQ. Tel: 071-602 0703 (Karen Dale).*

Oct. 18 *Chathurthi.*

Oct. 18 & 19 *Shobana Jeyasingh presents 'Romance. . .in footnotes' in Bharatha Natyam at Gulbenkiam Theatre, Canterbury. Tel: 0227 769075.*

Oct. 24 *Vijayathasami.*

Oct. 25 *Feast of Forty Martyrs of England & Wales.*

Oct. 26 *Eekathasi.*

Oct. 27 *Pirathosam.*

Oct. 28 *Feast of St. Simon & Jude Apostle; 6.00pm Lecture & Discussion on 'Religion & Racial Facts in Sri Lanka' at School of Oriental and African Studies. Tel: 071-278 3990. (S. Wijesinghe).*

House for Sale

Vivekananda Road, Colombo 6 – 2 unit house, each with 3 bedrooms ensuite bathrooms, kitchen, servant quarters, garage, built on 20 perches land – £90,000. Telephone 0736 65910 after 7.00pm.

Oct. 30 *Full Moon. 7.00pm* **Lakshmi's A.S.I.A.** *presents* **'Ramayana' (Ballet)** *in aid of* **SCOT** *at Logan Hall, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1. Tel: 081-870 9897/845 7900.*

At the Bhavan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HQ. Tel: 071-381 3086/ 4608.

Oct. 2 *7.00pm Gandhi Jayanthi. Lecture & Bajans. All welcome.*

Oct. 9 & 23 *5.30pm lecture on* **Bhagavad Gita** *by* **Shri Mathoor Krishnamurthi.**

Oct. 10 Sitar *by* **Subroto Roy Chowardhury.**

Oct. 17 Bharatha Natya Recital *by* **Indhumathi Srikumar.** *Tel: 0277 223981, 0322 666330 & 081-518 5501.*

Oct. 31 *6.30pm* **Karnatic Vocal Recital** *by* **Smt Sivasakti Sivanesan.**

Menaka's Arangetram

Menaka, *16-year-old daughter of Mr. Sri Pathy and Sudha Thillaiampalam, presented on the 4th of September 1993, one of the most spectacular Arangetrams Boston, in Massachussetts, USA has seen.*

In the tastefully decorated Winchester High School Auditorium, the audience was captivated with the performance for the full two and a half hours. Menaka began her dance training from the tender age of five under her mother, who is also a dancer, and then under Neena Gulati for the past six years.

Menaka on this occasion performed 9 different items in Bharatha Natyam and Kuchipudi. The introductory piece was an invocation to Lord Ganesha. This was followed by Jathiswaram and Krishna Sabdam. She showed remarkable facial expressions during the Krishna Sabdam, where she played with Krishna offering him sandalwood paste, flowers and betel leaves. The Varnam, most complex and demanding dance revealed her flawless footwork and her mastery of exquisite expressions. Followed by Paras Ragam Natarajah dance, where Menaka depicted various sculptures of poses of Lord Natarajah. Meera Bajan and Kunthalavarali Thillana was followed in which Menaka demonstrated a variety of cross rhythmic patterns.

The Arangetram started on time and kept the audience spellbound by fast rhythmic pieces till the very end. The young artiste showed her rare ability when she did the final piece in Kuchipudi when she amazed the audience dancing on the edge of a brass plate. It was a feat that would have been extremely difficult, but Menaka went through the number with great precision and expertise. These and the Mangalam completed the scintillating evening of entertainment which showed the dedication of this young dancer.

The young artiste was blessed by the chief guest Mrs. Padmini Ramachandran well known actress and dancer and the galaxy of supporting artistes: Mr. Aravindakshan Vocal; T.K. Ramakrishnan Mridangam; Mrs. Durka Krishnan Veena; Dr. W.V. Panchacharam and Murali on flute.

Jaffna Hindu Wins Cricket Trophy, Chundikuli Girls Are Netball Champs

Jaffna School Sports Association (UK) staged their second annual Cricket festival on the 30th of August at the John Billiam sports grounds in Harrow, Middlesex. Jaffna Hindu College emerged as this year's champions beating the favourites – Jaffna Central College (last year's winners) in a nail biting final encounter. An added attraction at this year's festival was the inclusion of a Netball tournament, where eight schools clashed vigorously for the championshship trophy which was clinched by Chundikuli Girls College. Play commenced at 9.30 with 13 cricketing schools (Chithambra College, Jaffna Hindu, Manipay Hindu, Hartley, Kokuvil Hindu, St. Henry's, Jaffna Central, Mahajana, St. Johns, St. Patricks, Skandavarodya, Stanley and Union College) taking part in a seven-a-side tournament. Jaffna Hindu College beat Hartley College in the first semi-final to play Jaffna Central College who beat Manipay Hindu in the other semi-final. It was now more or less dusk and the clock had already struck 8pm. With rapidly fading light and poor visibility Jaffna Central went to bat first in the final encounter. The over rate was cut down to 5 balls per over. Jaffna central lost one wicket for a total of 36 runs. Jaffna Central's skipper Manodarmaraj had to retire hurt in the second over, having been struck by a quick delivery on his unguarded face. This of course turned out to be a sad loss to Central who had entered the tournament with two of their top players on the sick list. When Jaffna Hindu padded up, the light was poor by any cricketing standard. However, they braved the attack creditably and emerged as champions for the first time, beating Jaffna Central by 3 runs and an over to spare. The final encounter was scheduled for 17.30 hours but it was rather unfortunate that the organisers were unable to get the various matches played on time and there also appeared to be an unnecessary delay between matches, resulting in a very late start to conclude the final match. Jaffna Hindu was led by Prabananthan.

The Netball Tournament was enthusiastically contested by Illavalai Convent, Union College, Vembadi Girls High School, Chundikuli Girls College, Stanley College, Hindu Ladies College, Mahajana and Holy Family Convent Jaffna. Holy Family Convent conceded defeat to Chundikuli Girls in their semi final by 5 to 29 and went on in the final to meet Hindu ladies College who had already beaten Vembadi Girls High School, rather convincingly in the second semi-final by 12 to 6. The final encounter for the challenge trophy was well fought by Chundikuli Girls and Hindu Ladies College. A younger and experienced side with a good skill of shooting power, put Chundikuli Girls to annexe the first JSAA (UK) Netball Challenge Cup by beating the Hindu Ladies by 32 to 20.

The Tournament was declared open by Dr. T. Raj Chandran, Commissioner for Racial Equality and a past pupil of Kokuvil Hindu College. Councillor Sinna Mani, Lord Mayor of Lewisham distributed the various prizes.

The results of the raffle draw are as follows:

1st Prize, Return Air Ticket to Colombo: **yellow ticket 3207.**

2nd Prize, Return Air Ticket to New York or Toronto: **white ticket 7724.**

3rd Prize **Return Air Ticket to Paris white ticket 9543.**

Consolation Prizes:

1. Answer Phone: **white ticket 9581.**

2. Case of Lion Lager: **white ticket 9731.**

3. Case of King Fisher Lager: **white ticket 7725.**

4. Bottle of Brandy: **yellow ticket 3245.**

5. Bottle of Whisky: **yellow ticket 4617.**

Dr. K.C. Rajasingham.

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Venue: Lola Jones Hall, Tooting Leisure Centre, Greaves Place, Garratt Lane, LONDON SW17

Time: 7.00pm

For tickets and further information please contact:

Mr. S. Anandarajah	0707-52819	Dr. S.Thurairatnam	081-942 6643
Mr. S.Jeyapalan	081-361 3931	Mr. K.Kandasamy	081-441 2791
Mr. J.Ratnarajah	081-588 8162	Mr. S.Vivekanandan	081-646 1658
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	01 Dec-09 Dec & 25 Dec-30 Apr			£485	£295
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BOMBAY/DELHI VIA COLOMBO	01 Sep-30 Nov *(No stop over in Colombo)*			£370	£226
MADRAS/TRIVENDRUM VIA COLOMBO	01 Sep-30 Nov *(No stop over in Colombo)*			£425	£259
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